

**Le Typhus de 1847 / The Typhus of 1847 Virtual Archive**

**Annals of the Grey Nuns, *Ancien Journal*, volume II, 1847.**

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June 9<sup>th</sup> 1847

The TYPHUS of 1847

June 9th, EIGHT Grey Nuns

and FIVE women leave

for the SHEDS.

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THE TYPHUS OF 1847

The following was published in “REVUE CANADIENNE” in 1898. Since then, it has been enriched by very precious letters and notes.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FAMINE IN IRELAND

The year of 1847 was one of the bleakest years in the history of our great city of Montreal; but before telling the mournful story which unfolded, it helps to start at the source of evil.

The abysmal blight that had been ravaging unfortunate Ireland for a great number of years had reached its peak. Houses were deserted, as a result of either death or fear of it. The newspapers of the time were filled with distressing details of what was happening in this unfortunate region. M. CUMMINS, magistrate of County Cork, addressing the Duke of WELLINGTON, said:

. . . “Having heard of the frightful misery which exists in the parish of MIROSS, South Keen, I brought along with me as much bread as FIVE men could carry. Upon arriving, I found a village seemingly deserted; I entered a few homes; in the first, I saw SIX ghosts or skeletons sprawled in the back of a room, in an obscure corner, on top of hay, all sharing a bad horse cover for a blanket; I approached these unfortunate people, and I saw that they were consumed by a burning fever, all SIX, the husband, his wife and the FOUR children holding each other.

News of my arrival spread, and I was soon surrounded by TWO HUNDRED (200) ghosts, several of which were delirious. I still hear their savage cries, I still see their haggard eyes, their appearance bleak and wild. When I wanted to leave, I

experienced such pain in ridding myself of the hold of a woman who was breastfeeding a newborn. The unfortunate woman and her children were in a state of almost complete nudity. The police opened a house that had been closed for several days; we found on the floor two frozen cadavers, half devoured by rats! A mother in delirium had wanted, for the sake of modesty, to bury and hide her daughter's completely naked cadaver under the rocks, she was twelve years old. The doctor at the clinic found SEVEN people in a house sheltered under the same blanket. One of the members of this group of people had been dead for several hours. The survivors did not have the strength to remove the corpse nor move themselves. . . . .”

Again we read in a commissioner's report in the BUREAU DE BIENFAISANCE (Poor law Union) from Skibbereen, county Cork, to the Interior Minister, Sir George GREY, that the inhabitants of this unfortunate city were dying like imprisoned brutes. A frightening apathy, like that which characterizes the ill-stricken, numbs the unfortunate population. Hunger has destroyed any seed of generous sympathy in this town; despair has rendered it insensitive and has in a way petrified it. It awaits its last moment, with a sad indifference, not fear. There is not a single unfortunate home in which death has not entered.

Whole families, devoured by this ardent fever, are sprawled on rotting straw, strewn here and there on a humid floor, and no one is ever there to moisten their burning lips or lift their poor heads. The husband dies next to his wife, without her seeming to doubt that he has nevertheless liberated himself from the sufferings of this earth.

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THE FAMINE IN IRELAND

It is the same shred of fabric that covers cadavers and the living, who do not seem to be bothered by this unpleasant company. Rats come searching for their prey amongst this mix, no one has enough energy to disrupt their feast.

Fathers bury their children in isolated corners, without even sighing: poor abandoned tombs over which no mother, no friend will weep! . . . .

In response to this memory, Sir GEORGE GREY addressed a letter to the commissioners in which he confesses to the powerlessness of the English Government in coping with this horrible crisis which rampages across Ireland.

What have you done, oh Albion! . . . What have to you say? Will you then compensate the unfortunate Ireland in taxes, in slavery which you have not ceased to impose on her! Ah! It is not so much the famine that will decimate this once prosperous population but rather the unjust and cruel laws that you impose on the culture of this fertile land.

Nevertheless, the whole of Europe is moved by this heartbreaking spectacle. The Sovereign Pontiff, father of the universal Church and true to his faith, is softened by Ireland's distress. He sends one thousand crowns from his treasury and orders collections in the eternal City. Addressing himself to the bishops of the world, PIE IX said "We appeal to your charity and ask you to inspire the people entrusted to your protection, to offer relief to the Irish nation through generous donations. You do not need us to tell you the importance of these alms, nor the rewards of obtaining the clemency of our saintly and high God. In the saintly Fathers of the Church, and

principally in a great number of Saint Leon the Grand's sermons, you will find praises given to alms offered with discernment and wisdom. You will have read the admirable letter written by the martyr saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, addressed to the bishops of Numidia. This letter contains great proof of the particular zeal which the people under his care demonstrated, to come to the aid of Christians in need with generous donations. By his instructions and by others also, you should see to it that Ireland's unfortunates be rescued.

The bishops responded to the Pope's request; from all parts of the world, for abundant donations were sent to the Church's veritable children in green Erin.

We estimate \$100.000.00 was the total of a collection made in New York for Ireland; an anonymous woman sent \$1.000.00; some said that New York contributed \$300.000.00, Philadelphia \$250.000.00, Washington \$500.000.00, Charlestown \$100.000.00, New-ORLEANS \$250.000.00.

A great quantity of clothing and many provisions were also part of this contribution.

The bishops then attempted to inspire their faithful to charity for Ireland. Mgr. the Archbishop of Quebec addressed a publication to all parish priests of his dioceses, dated February 12<sup>th</sup> 1847, and February 19<sup>th</sup>, Mgr. of Montreal, through the intermediary of Mgr. Prince, addressed the clergy of his diocese as follows:

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The status of the Famine which can be found in many parts of Europe, notably in Ireland and Scotland, inspires in this moment great uncertainty as to the fate of so many millions of men. Today they are the prey of the horrors of hunger and tomorrow perhaps to the devastations of the pestilence, and we remain insensitive spectators to their suffering and their deaths: my heart is again so saddened on hearing about so many unfortunates that I ardently solicit the cooperation of all the faithful of the diocese, to come immediately to the aid of their miserable brothers who have been struck by the hand of God and await for at least a small portion of the bread which can revive them from us.

Anyways here it is not a question of what is owed by fellow subjects from the same empire, and for many their national connections, as for all it is always a question of the rights and obligations of humanity. However there is more still, since almost the totality of this suffering population is composed of Christian Catholics the faith of which edifies this country, and whose generosity is known all over the world.

Your zeal must then, sir, resound again in our countryside to inspire charity in the heart of our towns and villages. In all possible ways we are organizing ourselves, and are striving to prove through generous donations, despite the rigor and difficulty of these times, that it is not in vain that we reclaim all rights, all privileges of British subjects, since we are acquitting them of obligations in this time of need, and since no one shrinks away from distress, upon hearing of a calamity regardless of one's

distance from it.

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“ To this end, you should get in contact with the most charitable people of your parish, and after having communicated my desires to your good people and having used one of your sermons to stoke their charitable sympathies in favour of their brothers dying of hunger, advise them how to immediately offer collections, through provisions or otherwise, to the bishop or the seminary of Montreal, or to the committee of the town charged with this work; or at least, to the vicar closest to your community, so that it arrives towards the middle of next month.”

Faithfully, Sir, etc.

(Signed) J.C Bishop of Martyropolis

Administrator.”

If in Canada, the collections do not amount to a number as considerable as that reached in the United-States, they are nevertheless the fruit of much sacrifice and deprivation.

In Quebec, these requests have raised over \$3.400.00. The Canadians of faubourg Saint-Roch, despite their poverty and their affliction, have offered 480 louis. A poor woman who had only TEN shillings in all, offered them willingly.

In Montreal, the subscriptions amounted to 2,169 louis. A quest in the town of Bytown produced 30 louis. At Brockville, we collected 144 louis. Cobourg gave over 300 louis. A priest in Bytown sent to the committee for his part 63 louis. The parishes of our countryside are no less involved, sometimes offerings of

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300 to 400 louis arrive. Many more offerings still arrive. . . . .

Ireland's plight has become a universal plight. All eyes are turned towards this island, named the Island of Saints, but we can also call it the Island of Martyrs.

With laudable zeal, generous hearts are bared in its favour. We calculate that - one million canadian dollars, in the form of contributions from our continent, have been trusted to a vessel which will take this charity to the coasts of green Erin.

It was written in DUBLIN on March 6<sup>th</sup>, in the "MORNING CHRONICLE:"  
 "Newspapers from the province still contain the most distressing details about the famine. We are importing food and the government and others make an effort of generosity; but how can we save an entire population succumbing to hunger? In the town of Derrymacash, county Antrim, from January 1<sup>st</sup> to February 26<sup>th</sup>, we counted 400 deaths. The county of Armagh has suffered much; in the occidental division of West Carberry, the local authority was forced to order the digging of new graves, the land no longer sufficient. In a Mission for the Poor in KILKENNY, 520 with fever succumbed. What renders the fever deadly is that typhus often complicates it.

In the testimony of Lord LANDSDOWNE, minister of commerce at this time, and great landowner in Ireland, he states that one million men, women and children have died from hunger and fever since the beginning of the famine.

Despite its terrible condition, Ireland does not cease to be faithful



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in its belief. In certain townships, alms are served to proselytise: “One Rev. Parson of Ballinakill, obliges a poor woman dying with her child to abjure her religion; he offered her money, provisions, clothing, shoes and even toys for her child.

Nevertheless this poor woman turned towards her priest, saying that she had never changed religion, and even baptised her child who hadn't yet received this right.

In Kilmore, a ticket was given to a poor individual to receive provisions; this ticket contained insults towards the catholic priest and affirmed that the porter renounced his religion. The poor man was indignant and said he would rather die of hunger than change his religion.

In another county, in accordance with the ruling of Exerter Hall Charity the rev. secretary of the committee gave a pint of corn to those who went to the protestant church and another pint to each child who went to Bible School.

“This Charity-Hall, adds the “*Les Mélanges Religieux*” newspaper on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1847, that would have us take part in these occurrences, are worse than the market trade of negroes, in which case only the body is sold, but in this case, the soul itself is sold.

Catholics from all countries of the world have generously collected immense sums for the relieving of the poor Irish, without distinction of religion; and now, these offerings are used but for the sake of proselytizing.”

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Supposing even that we employed for this only the donations of protestants, it would still be a detestable thing to use this money for the corruption of the consciences of the faithful; they would no longer be alms, but corrupt contributions.

While we have blocked all feelings of indignation in the face of this petty propaganda, the scourge marches on with giant steps and devastates left and right all around.

Those that have managed to survive have already fled towards other places. The emigration will continue in unprecedented proportions. In the month of April, 1268 emigrants arrived in Boston from Ireland, 78 of which died during the journey. Almost at the same time, 2152 landed in New York.

Our peaceful shores will soon be crowded by similar numbers.

## CHAPTER II

## IRISH EMIGRATION TO MONTREAL IN 1847

Spring was approaching in Montreal; this rendered free the course of our majestic Saint-LAWRENCE; small boats crossed each other in all directions in the port, our steamboats arriving from QUEBEC, from TROIS-RIVIERES, from SOREL and other little towns and big cities looming on the route of our strikes. June seemed to bring days full of purity and hope. Alas! These happy prospects would soon dim. Already terror began to reign.

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QUEBEC and overseas newspapers did not cease talking of Irish emigration. Some statistics from the time are as follows: "From January 1<sup>st</sup> to May 17<sup>th</sup> inclusive, 4,627 passengers arrived at the quarantine stations. 537 died at sea. 1,115 were received by the Hospital of the Marine. 795 of these were ill with typhus. The number of emigrants arriving in QUEBEC on May 27<sup>th</sup> was 5,546, and on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 25 ships were expected to arrive at GROSSE-ISLE."

We do not neglect the devotion with which QUEBEC attempted to prevent the spread of the scourge and the care with which they tried to wrestle so many victims from death. Despite the diligent services of the Faculty of Medicine and the precautions implemented, a great number of emigrants died at GROSSE-ISLE and at the Hospital of the Marine. We had arranged to transport the convalescent who seemed to have not yet caught the contagion to Montreal. The annals of Canada preserve the memory of the heroic devotion of the Quebec clergy in this disastrous episode for us. Fifty-one priests were directed towards Grosse-Isle or towards the Hospital of the Marine to exercise their saintly ministry. Twenty-five caught the

contagion; the coadjutor himself Mgr Baillargeon was not exempt and five priests were victims of their apostolic charity. Montreal prepared itself with anxiety to receive the emigrants. An assembly took place at the courthouse presided over by Mayor M. MILLS. An emigration committee was organized with the instruction to take immediate measures

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to properly receive Ireland's unfortunate children.

Accordingly, an office was opened near the canal's neighbouring quays, under the direction of a government agent. A temporary establishment was equally prepared outside the city to serve as a hospital. Since the first days of June, people shipped from overseas have been arriving at the city. Funeral convoys arrive day and night from which hundreds of men and women, pale, exhausted from misery and suffering, were disembarking from the warehouse and even from the end of the platform. A great number died during the voyage. How does one describe such a spectacle? Those who witnessed it left horrified, even the most insensitive of souls were affected... Poor emigrants! They arrive to this strange land after having suffered during the crossing. . . And what do they find, most of them? . . . A tomb ready to receive them. What could Montreal offer these poor brothers in faith? Its citizens, especially in this day and age, were more compassionate than fortunate.

Charitable Christians will nevertheless lavish their energy, their sweat, and their very lives such as the priests and sisters. The Messieurs of Saint-Sulpice, parish

pastors, were the first to run to the ships. M. John RICHARD spent the first night there, administering the confession to all those in danger of dying.

M. the Superior of the Seminaries did not hesitate in joining MM. Morgan, Carrof and others who speak English. Mgr. Bourget, Bishop of Montreal arrived from his second voyage to Rome. Barely recovered from his fatigue, His Eminence occupied himself, with

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his coadjutor Mgr. Prince, with ways to relieve the poor children of Ireland. We will soon admire his great devotion towards them. Towards mid-June, 6,000 Irish disembarked on our shores, 3,500 of which stopped at the sheds or ambulances. 2000 disappeared in search of more favourable pastures; many died. There nevertheless still remains 250 in the shelters. On June 25<sup>th</sup> of this same year, the sick numbered 850 in the shelters; around twenty were dying each day. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the sick numbered 1,300, the number of those who died went from THIRTY to FORTY a day. Death did not only prey on the ambulances, it also victimized those in the city, as the contagion began to spread, and spiritual relief was becoming more and more urgent in several neighbourhoods.

To meet this need, M. Billaudèle, Seminary superior, closed the College of Montreal and called on principals and professors to come to the aid of their colleagues, which brought shortly thereafter the aid of MM. of Charbonnel, P. Richard, H. Prévost, Connelly and Picard, and later the good Granet and Toupin; but such relief did not appear to be sufficient to the sensitive heart of the good superior, he went knocking on the door of the son of Saint Ignace with confidence, and the house of New-York sent him the RR.PP Mignard, Duranquet, Driscoll, Dumerle,

Ferrard and Shienski. They were lodged in the seminary and shared with the children of M. Olier, the labouring minister of the sheds and those of the city's different neighbourhoods. A more humble but no less useful devotion, should follow the tracks of our apostles to the fields of martyrdom: that of the Grey Nuns of the General Hospital and the other Montreal nuns. They deployed with such energy

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and activity that the memory of this period has remained with honour and benediction in the annals of the history of our city.

CHAPTER III  
THE GREY NUNS DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO  
THE RELIEF OF THE PESTILENT

Whereas the priests of Saint Sulpice go to the port to welcome a dying population, the Grey nuns of the General Hospital feel beating in their chests a heart already open to the generous aspiration to follow their venerable founder to the fields of suffering and death. They wait upon a single word, one order. The revered mother Forbes-McMullen, worthy superior of their community at this time, joining in strong and active faith, was tender, generous and compassionate towards the unfortunate. She learned some details on the situation of the emigrants who arrived on our shores, she was deeply moved, and, understanding with only one glance the duty owed to this community, conceived a bright desire to rush to the relief of this misery with her girls. She first wanted to consult M. Billaudèle, seminary superior; she left in haste with Sister Ste Croix (Pominville) to seek his advice. M. Billaudèle was absent, so she retraced her steps home with a feeling of abandonment. The heavens nevertheless accepted her sacrifice: the same day, reverend M.J. Richard, chaplain of the poor, accompanied by the reverend M. Connelly, came to the community to solicit the help of the Grey Nuns in the visiting of ambulances. The good mother who was just waiting for the approval of her superiors, accepted the proposition

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with joy, and went right away to present herself to the emigration office accompanied by Sister Ste Croix, whose devotion would be remarkable during this disastrous period.

They were welcomed with great courtesy and deference by the government steward, who gave all authorization necessary to the Grey Nuns to visit and take care of the pestilent, authorizing them to engage faithful men and women. The venerated Mother superior, almost surprised by this cordial welcome, is not surprised when she learned that she was preceded by the good M.J. Richard. Seeing the embarrassment of the steward in finding sufficient personnel to tend to the needs of the sick and dying, he suggested asking the Sisters of Charity if they would provide aid. This steward was protestant; he knew little about catholic institutions, and did not know who to address himself to; we understand his satisfaction in seeing the Grey Nuns offer themselves. He hastened to conduct them to a home almost in ruin by the river, under the name of the hospital.

What a spectacle unravelled in the eyes of this good mother and her company! Hundreds of people were laying there, most of them on bare planks, pell-mell, men, women and children. The moribund and cadavers are crowded in the same shelter, while there are those that lie on the quays or on pieces of wood thrown here and there along the river.

It was a spectacle that should have discouraged Mother McMULLEN and her generous companion. On the contrary, they felt their souls lifted to the heights of the mission that the heavens were preparing for them. The



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meeting they are in at this moment with the Seminary superior and the intrepid M. Morgan fills them with enlightenment. The latter has occupied himself with a poor sick individual that he covers in earth, suffocated by his own vomit; he puts them with such charity on a poor pallet, that they feel animated by a new ardour to come themselves, to save these unfortunate poor.

Once returned to the community, they have no expressions powerful enough to retell what they have seen. After supper, the venerated mother calls on the courage and the generosity of her girls, convinces them to combat in a new field of sacrifice; they are free nevertheless to appeal to their own strengths. The whole Community has but one heart and one soul to offer to the provision of its superior.

The good mother suggests the same to her sacrificial novices, the immolation offered to them, shining in their regard for this martyr's cross more brilliant still than the cross of their religious profession. All, like intrepid soldiers who wince at the sound of a bugle, answer this call: these are Sisters Saint-Joseph (Denis), Christin, Labrèche, Caron, Collins, Blondin, Montgolfier, Dalpée, Limoges, Primeau, Chevrefils, Perrin; and the postulants, Sister Thériault, Reid, Bruyère, Lepailleur, Maréchal and Sauvé.

“June 9<sup>th</sup>, say the old manuscripts, EIGHT sisters and FIVE women left for the SHEDS, and the following Sunday, the 13<sup>th</sup>, there were 23... The community numbered at this time, thirty-seven sisters and eighteen novices.” The gracious Saint Francois of Sales was quite right in saying: “When

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the house catches on fire, we throw ourselves out the windows”. The fire of divine charity was already embracing the whole hospital. Only the most elderly and the infirm who were replacing the hospital workers charged with the care of the elderly and children stayed home. The names of the first Sisters who went to the SHEDS are barely mentioned in the convent annals; what a regrettable gap. However, do we ignore them? Is it not the entire community, as we have just mentioned, that we see on its feet?

Let us continue. . . The first shelters that the fellowship built to receive the emigrants stretched along the canal, this territory belonging to the General Hospital. Point-Saint-Charles, where it was situated, was once a rural valley, and very swampy, as this year saw torrential rains. Despite the mud and other inconveniences, the sisters made their journey within twenty minutes, already hearing the groans of the ill and the wails of the dying. . . We disperse ourselves in this unfamiliar maze. . . Could we imagine for a moment the spectacle this multitude of men and women piled pell-mell offered, up to three or four in the same bed, indifferent to everything, groaning, however, heartbreakingly? We were running here, running there. . . supporting a poor, dying woman, ripping away from her the poor infant she clung to so close to her heart. . . We point out the heavens to another while wiping away his agonizing sweat. We have the cadavers taken away from those still breathing, and we took a look

around us. . . We step outside the shelter only to find more of the miserable poor, recumbent without salvation, we eagerly go to their aid, multiplying our steps without counting. What misery! Who could

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describe them? This is not just a family, or one hundred that are ill, but almost an entire nation feeling the anxieties of this agony.

Unfortunate Ireland persecuted for its faith and exhausted with hunger on its soils, comes to a strange land to drink the dregs of its chalice. O Heaven, open yourself to us, and show us the palms of these new martyrs! In the first hours of our sisters in the SHEDS, do not make them feel the wrath of all the evils that are housed there. All day long, they seek to find prompt and salutary ways to face such suffering. These sheds are usually 100 to 200 feet long and 25 by 30 in size, separated by walls and contiguous from one another. Some, however, are separated by a distance of 30 to 30 feet; this proximity renders service easier. They are furnished but with poor beds made from simple planks, attached to the walls and more or less inclined in the same way seen in barracks or in police stations. We will substitute them soon with bunks; these are poles with crude planks around the circumference of which a layer of straw makes a soft bed.

Some of the emigrants brought cots and blankets with them, but we no longer have these little furnishings or other objects today to help serve the ill. We simply draw water from the river and add broth in a huge pot or cauldron

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with a capacity of twelve gallons which is boiled over a fire lit in the middle of the court. Doctors and sisters take a pot or a bowl for the needs of their ill.

The government supplies fresh bread, tea and meat, and many charitable people from the city send provisions. The reverend Sisters of the Congregation, regretting not being able to follow their Sisters of Charity to the hospitals, provided sugar, cookies, tea and other sweets for the ill.

We see soldiers directing themselves towards the barrier at the entrance to the SHEDS to bring a portion of their rations. It is in these infirmaries infested with fever, where hundreds have caught the contagion and have died, that our good sisters go and in doing so, threaten their health and their lives.

Every day will be laborious and rich in all sorts of merits, and the night, in trusting their ill to people staying overnight, the sisters embark on their journey back to the community; but what precautions were needed to ensure that they did not take the contagion of this malignant fever with them. . . They venture to only the least inhabited areas, and there they hurry to rid themselves of their habits and of the vermin attached to them, and communicating only minimally with the other sisters, take their rest. The following day at the early hour of the Holy Sacrifice, they hurry themselves to the altar to receive the Eucharist that gives them their strength and their consolation.

Filled with a courage reanimated within them by the spirit of the Martyr,

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the sisters return with no less joy to the post that charity offered to them. They are not the least bit surprised to find at the dawn of this new day the priests who were watching over the shelters when they left: it was the good Father Richards and the excellent M. Caroff, the two of them still standing after a night passed in the exercising of their holy ministry; they were pale and unkempt. Veritable sentinels, they did not whatsoever wish to abandon these poor souls at the final moment that would decide their eternities. The good sisters, more numerous today than yesterday, hurry to complete the general visit of this immense dormitory, in order to assess the conditions of their sick. Alas! Many are no longer any more than cadavers. We see poor little children still searching for the substance of life from the breast of their poor mother whom death had frozen. We meet here and there poor little creatures stiffened by death.

This expression cannot faithfully convey the terrible state in which these sick were strewn, as we have said, up to THREE in the same bed, next to those who died during the night.

A poor, dying individual was very agitated, a sister passing by, believed he was in his life's last moments of suffering; but to her horror she discovered this unfortunate was lying between two cadavers! One was all black, and the other livid, yellow, a hideous sight. She had the cadavers removed, and as soon as the moribund

calmed down, agony came to strike him, and he was soon nothing more than a cadaver that we hastened to remove.

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Since we had not yet constructed a mortuary for the dead, the corpses were exposed in the outdoors, and once there was a great enough number of them, we made a cemetery for the bodies in the neighbouring fields.

The odour that these cadavers produced and the horror they naturally caused add to the distressing picture of this situation. We nevertheless see the sisters calmly patrolling around the diverse enclosures; they take charge of the department Mother McMullen trusted them with. Sister BRAULT expends energy, as well as showing remarkable strength to gently care for her beloved sick. She is in charge of a SHED, and since it must be enlarged from time to time, she helps to transport the poor patients to the vehicle that will transfer them to another department, and then with satisfaction she returns to the bedside of the others to have them take the remedies which she prepared with care and to relieve them in any possible way.

Sister Desjardins appears to us as an unchanged, flowering figure. Oh! If she had in this moment her brushes and a canvas, she would faithfully reproduce the gloomy scenes of our sad shelters. But it is to these poor sick individuals that she presently gives all her time.

Over there, at the end of the dark corridor, I see the silhouette of Sister Marie (Barbeau). She strives to find the most miserable.

In effect, in this isolated place can be found a shed faintly lit by some glass. The hardened ground makes its floor.

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for the SHEDS.

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A number of convalescents which varies from day to day have taken charge of shredding cable, earning a small ration as a result. The good sister is among them; taking care of their needs with solicitude and she remains dedicated to this task without worrying herself with the humidity or the other inconveniences.

This valiant sister, who is not physically imposing, exerts an astonishing energy. We love seeing her by the bedsides of the ill, what care! What attention! What thoughtfulness! The most repugnant are those that she offers to care for with most haste. One day, she was working in a department that contained five hundred pestilent. Her gaze suddenly stopped on a poor dying woman; she ran to her side to prepare for her to receive the Extreme Unction; the moribund emitted a repugnant odour. Right after our dear sister removed the woman from the fetid pallet she hastened to put her on another. A young doctor arrived at this moment, offering to help the good sister in this service, but with hardly having moved this rotting body he felt such strong nausea that he went outdoors without delay to relieve himself through copious vomiting. He had no expression with which to sufficiently praise this little nun who had mastered nature's repugnances. Shortly after, the young doctor, caught the illness himself, wanted to have sisters by his bedside, and since he is Protestant, abjured his errors and did not cease to repeat that he owed his conversion to the beautiful example set by the Sisters of Charity. One morning when

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Sister Marie was sweeping the SHED under direction, an officer came with a squad of soldiers. Surprised to see this little nun in charge of this task, he commanded his soldiers who immediately seized the broom and cleaned the apartment in an instant.

Let us turn to Sister Croix-Pominville, who is so ardent in her offering of services to the hospitals; yes! Let us see her in action in this hospital on the river – an old house that was the first refuge of the emigrants. She was among a great number of sick whom she consoled with the expression of her pious sentiments.

Sister Deschamps, who would later be the community superior, in charge of Châteauguay Manor, found pleasure in spending her Sundays in the sheds to relieve her sisters.

She always remembered with consolation the moments she spent with Sister Ste Croix, her novitiate companion, and never forgot the impression made on her by the sight of eighty coffins piled one Sunday near the hospital in which sister Ste Croix worked, as they were prepared for a Monday burial.

Sisters Olier, Blondin, Caron, Cinq-Mars and others, replaced each other in turns. Sister Blondin breathes sacrifice and immolation.

Sister Saint-Joseph – Denis has not the least part to play in these miserable shelters. But let us go up to the attic, and see her in the middle of a great number of small children. The good sister cares for them with a faithful spirit, because otherwise, the nauseating odour, and



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all the repulsive care that the poor little ones require would turn her off, but she does not believe this to be too much of a price to pay for the cross of the religious order she will soon receive.

Sisters Montgolfier, Dalpé, Primeau, Chevrefils, Limoges and Labrèche equally have an unwavering courage. Always ready to relieve the most elderly and to offer themselves for the most low and meritorious tasks. A few weeks sufficed in order for the priests and nuns to establish order and regularity. The shelters were divided into several apartments, one for men, one for women, one for children. There was a SHED especially for welcoming arrivals.

It is in this shed that we recognize sister COLLINS, a young novice full of ardour and the spirit of sacrifice. We see her in the middle of a crowd of emigrants, keeping her calm, listening with deference and gentleness, to the lamentations of the poor strangers.

She greets them with compassion, encourages them, makes them hope for better days.

All those who were denied access to other shelters, she keeps near here, multiplying her efforts to improve their sad situation. How many times did she hold herself back from bathing these poor dying souls with her tears?

The hangar which she was able to use was very low and very narrow, lacking beds, without doubt, since one had needed to lie down next to the poor to have them drink; but her great courage did not weaken; if she could not relieve their bodies, she knew at least

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that she could relieve their souls by making them foresee the eternal life. Oh! How her discourses were sympathetic to the dying! She had a gift to touch their hearts. . . What souls she pulled out of heresy! . . . In seeing Protestant ministers circulating in the shelters, she made a good guard against those who wished to indoctrinate; she confounded with her responses full of sense and doctrine those who asked her reckless questions.

Another affliction distressed her heart when she saw the arrival of emigrants: it was the heart wrenching goodbyes they said to each other when men, women and children were separated to be placed in their respective shelters. Similar scenes were repeated often within and outside the shelters, and the hearts of our dear sisters were often crushed with pain.

One day, a poor Irishman who had disembarked that day arrived at the SHEDS and asked about his wife who had preceded him on his journey to Montreal. No one was able to give him news: he ran about the shelters worried and disconsolate without finding her; he finally arrived at the place where the cadavers of those who had died during the night were put; he examined them one by one: he stopped and threw himself on the ground while screaming in lament, dragging himself to one of the cadavers which he covered in kisses and tears. He had found the one who had been

his companion and his consolation in life. His despair knew no bounds and he left at a slow pace, convinced that he was the only one left of his family.

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These scenes repeat themselves every day, when we proceed to the sepulcher of the dead; fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, and children, surrounding those who are so dear to them, so opposed to their departure, letting out cries that provoke tears.

The priests, the nuns linger in these scenes of desolation to temper the bitterness with words of peace and resignation. Sister MONTGOLFIER traversing the enclosure met a little girl of 11 or 12 years old who was looking for her mother; she had been transported to Montreal before her. The good Sister took her affectionately by the hand and went with her from bedside to bedside. All anxious, the little one looked left and right, her little heart beating with fear and hope. All of a sudden she heard a most tender exclamation "O Mother!" but in embracing her mother, her little arms held a moribund on her last breaths. Another morning, Sister MONTGOLFIER was completing her usual visits when she noticed that young children had entered the enclosure where their dead father lay; these poor little ones were calling him caressing him and playing amongst themselves.

Worried about the fatigue that this illness could cause, the vigilant sister hastened to make the young children back away, but, what pain! Their father was but a cadaver! Such force did she need to take these children away while hearing their

heart breaking cries; she guided them to the SHEDS designated for children and a few days later, she placed them happily with a family.

The following autumn, sister Montgolfier was once again in the SHEDS

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when an Irishwoman recovering from typhus arrived searching for her husband and children. After many questions, the sister recognized the unfortunate mother of the little orphans she was caring for. With haste she gave her all the details to satisfy her. This poor woman put her hands together and raised her gaze towards the heavens: Ah! My sister, said she, with the deepest of pain; I am consoled to learn that my children are still alive and that they have been returned to me! Blessed be the Lord! This family's name was McKay. As we have seen, there was a shed specifically designated for children. It was M. J. Richard who solicited it from the government, in the fear that the Protestants would seize these poor little ones. He had little bunks transported and wished to help fill the benches. It is without doubt on this occasion that he requested hay from the emigration intendant: "With pleasure, replied the latter, if only I had a load of gold to send this holy man instead".

M. Pierre Richard shared the same sentiments as his namesake and colleague; he enjoyed furthering the Christian Education of these unfortunate orphans by teaching them the first notions of the catechism.

Let us add a few details on the goodness and the patience of this holy priest. One day, after giving confession to a poor woman lying on a pallet serving equally as the home of her children, he left covered in filth; he was then obliged to go clean his cassock at great cost to him. In another meeting, again giving confession to a

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poor dying mother, who was holding a little girl with great concern, the good priest took the child in his arms and held it, all the while lending an ear to the dying. These good Sulpician priests and many other priests who shared their ministry, were well practiced in the role of nurses, and performed all kinds of services for the patients.

Before closing this chapter, we would like to recall the memory of the good Dr. Schmidt, who was for sixteen years the esteemed doctor of the Community of the Grey Nuns. Even as a young man, he devoted himself with untiring zeal to the care of the pestilent. Small children were the special object of his care. Heaven blessed him and poured wonderful gifts on him and his family. The annals of the community carefully preserve the biographical information belonging to this late doctor. Here are some excerpts:

“November 4<sup>th</sup> (1880), Doctor SCHMIDT ended his edifying life at the age of 54 years old.

His father, who had come from Germany, had established himself in Canada; and although Protestant, he married a fervent Catholic. Like another Monica, she had obtained her beloved son’s change of heart through prayer and tears.

Doctor S. –E Schmidt, was born in Montreal on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1826, he studied medicine at McGill University and graduated at the age of 21. He followed the belief of his father, or rather did not make a profession of a cult; he thought only of making

a glorious path in the career that he had embraced; the terrible epidemic of 1847 arrived on our shores.

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Doctor Schmidt ran to the SHEDS with alacrity; he caught the contagion, but the divine Providence watched over his life.

Mgr. Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, who had remarked on the young doctor's assiduous care, wanted to visit him, and seeing his pious mother almost alone on the bedside, because of the general terror that reigned the city, his Highness became a nurse and deigned to share the care and the solicitude of the poor mother.

Every day, the humble Bishop went to the aid of his patient, washed him, changed him and performed all possible services. The latter understood nothing of his selflessness, and as he saw him one day on his feet, washing them without repugnance, began thinking of the Catholic Bishop who had lost spirit, and as the delirium of the fever made him naively express his thoughts, did not delay in saying to the Monsignor: "They say I am crazy, but you are the crazy one to do what you are doing."

Nevertheless the Montreal Mgr continued his nursing services with zeal and devotion, and sanctified his physical care by his union with God, he did not cease praying. The sick man, tired of hearing this, interrupted him without shame by saying "You are tiring me." The peaceful Prelate immediately ceased and continued his incessant oration only in his heart.

After several assiduous days by his patient who was quickly nearing his end, the Monsignor was finally able to place a little crucifix at the foot of his bed which at

first was regarded with indifference; but he then gradually became familiarized with the

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touching image of our Redeemer and regarded it with love. The gaze of our Holy Saviour was turned towards his very regard of love with deep tenderness, he touched him, and there were tears in the eyes of this poor patient and repentance in his heart. He abjured his errors, and Monsignor administered him the Last Rights, as he looked as though he was nearing the end; yet suddenly his state improved, and we saw him gradually become stronger. He was cured, but mostly converted to a good Christian; he never wavered in his first steps towards salvation, and he accomplished his religious duties.

All his life, he was a subject of edification, through his fidelity to accomplishing the pious practices that were prescribed to him. Every day, he recited the rosary and several prayers of devotion. He was very assiduous in his receiving the very Holy Sacrament and Communion on Sundays and very often during the week.

He had nine children: one is a Jesuit, another a doctor, the others are also remarkable citizens.

He did not wait for us to inform him when to receive the Extreme Unction, he demanded it himself. We administered it to him on October 31<sup>st</sup> in the presence of his family and of the Community Superior of the Grey Nuns, accompanied by the

assistant general. He died November 4<sup>th</sup>, towards six in the evening. His service was held at Notre-Dame by his reverence M. Rousselot.

All the seminary priests were present in the chorus. In the nave a great number of nuns and novices from different houses of the Grey Nuns could be seen, as well as their orphans.

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At the end of the funeral, a constable headed the march, followed by the orphans of Saint-Patrick, carrying a veil in their arms. Following the orphans was the hearse, and the family followed by the orphans of the Saint-Joseph Hospice and the mother house; the sisters walked in the back. The procession directed itself towards Guy Street; all the elderly and other people remaining at the mother house left to salute with great respect the remains of one who had often relieved their suffering and cured their sick; and the convoy continued its walk as far as Notre-Dame des Neiges Cemetery. . . .”



CHAPTER IV  
MARTYRS OF CHARITY

TYPHUS is a plague which one does not confront with impunity or in circumstances presently exercised under one's control; it reaches its goal with deadly precision.

Several weeks have passed in the hospitals where hundreds of people succumb to the destructive waves of typhus. The priests and the nuns are still standing, but their footsteps are wavering. Only courage maintains their position. In a few more days we will have to provide them with reinforcements.

The good mother McMullen, who comes every day and encourages the work of her dear girls, remarks upon the change that is evident in their pale and thinning figures. Worried, she wishes to bring them relief. . . Alas! For around a month's time almost all her community is in the SHEDS. Since the beginning, she

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has had them take care of their health, obliging the nuns to go take their meals at the farmhouse near the sheds, where nothing was lacking for their care.

Yet in their ardent activity, they do not take this rest but for very regular hours, finding no joy in leaving the ill-stricken.

Many do not even make it to the farm, contenting themselves with dipping their bowls in to the communal pot of broth and taking a small portion of meat which they eat upon returning to their station. But this tireless action which will not slow

down, stops unexpectedly with the arrival of the evil pestilence. One night some sisters lay down in their bed and never rose again. The infirmary of the general hospital had begun to fill with nuns who have caught the contagion. The exercise room of the novitiate has been transformed into a dormitory for the dear and young novices who return in turns with the sword of sacrifice which will soon consume them in glorious martyrdom. ( 1 ) The good Sulpician fathers defend themselves in vain from the first attacks of the pestilence. M. MORGAN is conducted to Hotel-Dieu as well as the excellent M. CAROFF. Here come the first days of July, the Grey Nuns replace each other with difficulty in the infirmaries and cannot suffer alone any longer in caring for the pestilent; the untiring Community Superior becomes more and more

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( 1 ) During the month of August in the same year, mother McMullen wrote to the nuns of Saint Boniface: . . .”June 24<sup>th</sup>, the number of emigrants was 1,100. The 26<sup>th</sup> we call to our aid the Nuns of Providence. TEN among them have come to stay with us. We have continued to act together with them until July 7<sup>th</sup>. On this day, we could no longer continue having seventeen sisters ill with the fever. . . . .”

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worried, seeing the epidemic spread within the hospital itself, she made known her apprehensions to M. BILLAUDÈLE Seminary Superior; the latter made the situation known to Mgr Bourget. His Highness, filled with paternal solicitude, offered the good mother with haste TEN nuns of Providence. These reinforcements were extremely urgent.

June 26<sup>th</sup> we welcomed them to the hospital, and every morning these new nuns hurried along with the Grey Nuns to begin their work, Sister McMullen nevertheless wanted us to share tasks with discretion; part of them will work before lunch at the farm and others will take their place in the afternoon; thus every day by alternating work and rest, they will prolong their strength. The situation became more and more alarming, the number of sick is always growing. On July 2<sup>nd</sup> there were 1,300 ill, with thirty to forty dying each day. The assistance of the sisters diminishes, Monsignor opens the cloister doors, and the good nuns of the Hotel-Dieu exercise a zeal which they made known upon their arrival at the ships, in offering one of their rooms with fifty beds to receive the emigrants. ( 1 ) Mgr BOURGET follows with zeal to the service of the ambulances, and seeing the priests of Saint Sulpice in the embrace of an epidemic, his Highness went to the SHEDS. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, he spent the night

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( 1 ) In the same letter from the month of August addressed to the nuns of Saint Boniface, mother McMullen wrote again: . . . . “July 5<sup>th</sup>, SIX nuns from the Hotel-

Dieu have gone to the ambulances. They could only give their services for eight days.

In returning to the monastery, they are not disinterested whatsoever in their work.

They prepared vinegar syrup, etc. . . . .

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with Mgr Phelan, Bishop of Kingston. The two prelates exercised their holy ministry with much fatigue. The following day, they went to rest at the farm in Point Saint Charles. The illness nevertheless took its course on the girls of Madam d'Youville; on July 5<sup>th</sup>, according to the memoirs, twenty-three nuns had taken to bed, seventeen had caught the contagion, and those who were still standing were succumbing to fatigue in the service of their very own sisters. July 6<sup>th</sup>, mother McMullen succumbed to weariness. An illness of the entrails causing complete exhaustion gave birth to great worry amongst her girls. The same day, sister LIMOGES was administered, the 7<sup>th</sup>, fifteen sisters also received the Extreme Unction. It is in these very sad circumstances that the Community sang this year the first vespers of the birthday of the glorious Saint ELIZABETH, patron of the venerated superior.

The following day, the 8<sup>th</sup>, we learned that M. Patrick MORGAN died at the Hotel-Dieu, at thirty-two years old. He was one of the first to exercise his holy ministry at the SHEDS. His charity and his zeal were remarkable. We often saw him lying on the floor between two moribund patients to hear their confessions. Sister LIMOGES followed him shortly after, she succumbed on the 10<sup>th</sup>, after cruel suffering. Almost continually in delirium, she could not proclaim her religious wishes,

is the holocaust not yet consumed? This young novice, barely twenty years old, had a strong and robust temperament; her humour was soft, her companions loved her. Her obedience was

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remarkable, her tender compassion for the unfortunate manifested itself at the arrival of the poor Irish infected with typhus, she wished to be one of the first running to the sheds, but in replacing the extravagant sister, she had to contain her rising zeal.

“You are happy, said-she to her companions at the novitiate, to go care for members of Notre-Seigneur. I cannot wait to follow you. . . Will this day ever come?”

When she was named to share the fate of her sisters, she was so happy that she went to thank Notre-Seigneur at church and heard mass in thanksgiving for this favour. M. Lawrence McENERNY died the same day. This zealous priest also succumbed to the fatigues of the illness in the assiduous care he gave to his unfortunate compatriots which he found dispersed on the canal from Montreal to LACHINE. These first losses compounded the pain of the seminary and the hospital. Will they not be followed by other victims? Evidently, these first days of mourning will have a morrow even more sad.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, M. GOTTEFREY, having to exercise his ministry at the convent, arrived in the evening, probably after returning from the SHEDS. A few of our sisters met him, he told them with his vivacious and joyous humour: “Courage, my dear sisters, the sufferings are short, but the reward is eternal.”

In wishing goodnight to the superior whom he found very

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anxious and preoccupied with her patients, he said to her: "Take care to not kill yourself." It was 6:30 in the evening. He directed himself towards the Church of Notre-Dame de Bonsecours to be given the Holy Sacrament which he wished to receive as the last rites. Reaching the third floor of the sacristy and wishing to open the door giving passage to a gallery, he forgot, perhaps, or he did not know most probably that we had got rid of this gallery, and since he had made a great effort to open this door which we had taken care to nail shut sufficiently, he rushed into a drop of more than THIRTY feet high.

We transported him to the Hotel-Dieu, where it was not long before he expired and went to receive, the palm of the good servants always ready to immolate themselves in the service of the divine Master.

Let us borrow here a few lines from the pious biography of M. Billaudèle on the occasion of the premature loss. This death, amidst such a sad crisis broke the heart of our poor superior. No co-worker in the house dared bring her the news; R. Father Duranquet, S.J., a former student and spiritual child of M. Billaudèle at Clermont, had to charge himself with the task. The good father, taking things in the pure view of faith and in a tone more gay than sad, brought to M. Billaudèle the fatal news which left him dismayed and destroyed: "Eh! M. Superior, it is not the day of a battle that is sad for a military man, on the contrary, he is never more happy and more proud; we are as you in the breach and we are very happy. – You have reasons, said M.

Billaudèle, reanimated by these energetic words, and many times since M. Billaudèle declared that this way of announcing

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was in effect the only way he would have been able to take such a painful hit.” Like his glorious patron Saint Pierre, the pious Seminary superior had to advance more and more in the sea of pain and affliction.

The day after the death of M. Gottefrey, the 13<sup>th</sup>, he received with a no less grand submission news of the last breath of M. Caroff, a man of softness and a charming simplicity, a priest so zealous as well whose devotion was remarkable at the ambulances.

Sister Angelique Chevrefils – PRIMEAU – took her place after his in the mortuary catalogue after this disastrous episode. The name Angelique suited this novice very well. A smile on her lips, she was already ready to be of service without ever showing any repugnance. She made herself remarked by her love for regularity and obedience. Her attraction to relieving the unfortunate made her acceptance of working in the sheds a joyous one. She was clothed in her holy habit on June 24<sup>th</sup>, along with Sister Perrin. The following day, they were both named to go to the aid of the emigrants. A few days after, Sister Perrin came back with a fever, Sister Primeau stayed longer in the shelters, but a few weeks later, the germ of death was developing in her rapidly. As she conserved her lucid spirit, she had consolation in making her profession on July 12<sup>th</sup>, two days before her death.

She had lived for twenty years, ten months and eighty days.

The following day, the consternation was no less significant at the hospital than at the seminary in learning of the loss of the excellent

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M. Pierre Richard, who died at the Hotel-Dieu on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

A life more angelic than human characterized this minister of the altars who was but THIRTY years old. His thoughts were always elevated towards Heaven. He continually had on his lips expressions that reminded him of eternal hope. When one had him observe the storms of the season, the inconvenience of the rain in courses we had to complete, or when we had him notice that the vermin had attached itself to his habit, "Oh! All this, said-he smiling, are pearls for the sky." In the morning, upon his return from the ambulances, he greeted all the nurses with these words: "My Sister, is it today that we are going to see the Eternal Father?"

Very devoted in his service to the ill, he would have been a good nurse, he asked a good and courageous novice one day, Sister Dalpée who was as fatigued as he: "My sister, do you not think that we have gained a few planks for our coffins?"

We spoke highly of his affection for little children and his zeal for their instruction. The words of the divine Master have become true in his favour: "Those who had taught the little ones and the ignorant will shine like stars in Heaven."

The courageous sister Jeannette Collins, had also herself heard the voice of the Divine. It is July 16<sup>th</sup>. Her lamp is ready; the oil of a heroic charity has filled it; she bought this oil with her fatigue, her sweat, her sacrifices of all sorts



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amongst the pestilent, but mostly by her zeal in procuring the assistance of priests in their last moments.

Her religious instruction was of great service to her in answering the malicious and indiscrete questions asked by the Protestants. We recall one day, having absented herself for a few moments from the bedside of her patients, a Protestant minister exerted his propaganda and by consequence argued for the alleged reform. But the sister entered suddenly, her patients screaming: "Here is our celestial sister, here is our celestial sister. Come quickly, as this minister is telling us inconceivable things about the Holy Virgin." One can easily judge the stupefaction of the minister.

This dear novice was no less ardent at work than in her religious perfection, she applied herself to the acquisition of all virtues, especially those of gentleness, of amiability and of thoughtfulness towards her companions whom she loved with the charity of Our Father, being always ready to offer her service and console them in their pain.

Like her companions, delirium manifested itself at the end of her cruel suffering and its excess brought her to great piety. We heard her expressing as if in a state of joy: "I see the Baby Jesus." She reached her arm towards him. "Look at Baby Jesus, he is beautiful. . . I want to go to him, let me leave with my Jesus." We asked her if she wished to be cured. "Oh! No, I want to die so as to love Jesus in Heaven."

She died as she had so desired, this young novice of twenty years, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of July.

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Good mother McMullen dealt with these painful losses with a Christian resignation; the chalice is still half full. Here she is today, July 21<sup>st</sup>, at the bedside of the admirable sister Marie (Barbeau), professed since twenty-two years old, this good model of regularity and all religious virtues. This good sister will die! She will die as a victim of the care she gave to pestilent people. Oh! She always loved the most neglected. Who could forget her immense charity, when charged with the house's finances, she obtained permission to nourish as many poor individuals from the outside as she could with the remainder, without any detriment to current spending needs. A great number incurred every day, it was a sight to see how much she was loved and respected by the unfortunates.

In carrying out her duties, she passed to the women's room and from there to the men's room. It is in this latter post that the superiors found her willing to place her good elderly patients in the hands of sister Nobless, to go to the ambulances, where she was so happy to sacrifice the life that God had prolonged by a few years to honour his faithful servant, the blissful Alphonse Rodriguez, who had been invoked for the cure of an illness that drove this dear sister to the extreme. She died at the age of 46.

Sister Alodie Bruyère, postulant, died on the 23<sup>rd</sup>; she had but just arrived at the sheds and she caught the contagion almost immediately. Her illness was cruel, her poor body fell into a putrid state. In her delirium, she sang with ardour: "Oh Jesus, guide my steps." All these good

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children, according to the memoirs, in speaking of novices, promised a long existence. It was on these young, vivacious seedlings that we based our pious hopes. ( 1 ) It pleased the Lord to transport them to the eternal regions; may He be blessed and exalted for decades and decades!

Mourning at the Seminary seemed to alternate with that of the Grey Nuns community. A new mortality came to fill these two houses with pain. The venerated M. JOHN JACKSON RICHARD succumbed as well, at the age of SIXTY-EIGHT (68), an admirable devotion he displayed towards his unfortunate Irish brothers. It has been said, that it was him that welcomed them during the first night of their arrival; it was also him who persuaded the emigration intendant to ask the Sisters of Charity for their aid in caring for the sick. It was him again who interested himself with so much tenderness in the poor little orphans at the SHEDS; he procured them shelters, had them given clothes and prepared them for bed. He enjoyed staying with them, recited his prayer book to them. Late in his illness, he occupied himself with this task so close to his heart. He recommended it instantly to the nuns when he visited the Hotel-Dieu.

M. John Jackson Richard was an American, born into Protestantism, who came to Montreal in 1807, with the intention of preaching and converting to Protestantism the Montreal clergy which he knew to be

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( 1 ) “Thank the good Lord, again wrote mother McMullen to the nuns of St Boniface, in the month of August in that same year, to have supported us in his grace and for having submitted us to his loving willingness. Not a word of complaint or regret was to be heard. . . .”

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June 9<sup>th</sup>, EIGHT Grey Nuns

and FIVE women leave

for the SHEDS.

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the principal support of the Catholic religion in Canada. To attain his goal with certainty, he addressed himself directly to the Seminary superior, the venerated M.J. Auguste ROUX; but it was there that God waited for him, to enlighten his just spirit and his heart full of righteousness and good faith. Instructed, convinced and penetrated by the wise and knowledgeable instructions he received from M. Roux, he opened his eyes to the truth, abjured his errors, and by the same zeal which brought him to Canada, he asked to enter the ecclesiastical service and become through his own knowledge, extreme piety, the admirable gentleness of his character, the exquisite politeness of his manners, a model for the country's clergy and one of the most distinguished members of the Montreal Seminary. He was so attached to the person of M. Roux that when the latter, in his later years, had to, by doctor's orders, take a trip to Europe in 1826, M. John RICHARD lavished the most tender and affectionate care on the venerated infirm man, until his death on April 7<sup>th</sup> 1831.

The government intendant, who knew to appreciate these beautiful qualities in M. RICHARD and enjoyed taking his advice during the age of TYPHUS, caught the contagion and died a few weeks after this holy priest.

The regrettable M.J. RICHARD was the last victim at the seminary, FIVE priests ravaged by death in SIXTEEN (16) days, and many other very sick, among others MM. McMAHON, Prévost, and de CHARBONNEL. . . Was the most sensitive heart of the good father Billaudèle not yet

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saturated with pain? On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Rev. M. REY, a French priest associated with the Bishop's ministry, also died of typhus which he contracted in exercising his charity in the sheds.

Mother McMullen had not emptied her chalice, but this time, it is the dregs that drip onto her lips. Her dear secretary, sister Sainte Croix is to be delighted; this religious model, her dignified confidence . . . young still. . . we were counting on long services. There was so much maturity in her judgement, so much innocence in her action, so many resources in her aptitudes. Alas! Said the good mother, but instants ago: "My God! Again another. . . my secretary. . ." Poor mother, subjects such as these have justly earned your maternal tears.

Sister Sainte Croix-Pominville, added the above mentioned qualities to a highly elevated education. While her mother was Protestant, our dear sister triumphed in her prejudgments about this error, and especially the attractions of vanity. She chose to share in the community of the Grey Nuns, which she said, seemed to be the most austere and the most humble of those she knew. We did not delay in appreciating this treasure which the divine Providence had given this house. The welcoming spirit dominated this fervent sister Saint Croix. Its memory lingered like a perfume of edification with all who knew her. In the middle of the most proper occupations from which one is easily distracted, she never wavered in God's presence. To a modest and reserved character she joined a great simplicity in her actions; her actions were full of gentleness and affability.

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Like all the sisters who sacrificed themselves in caring for the pestilent, she had a noble and saintly tolerance for misery. . . Also she was always ready to visit the afflicted and the ill. Her great consolation was spending her nights in the most abandoned of lodgings. When the first emigrants arrived, she pressed on mother McMullen to take this great task into consideration, offering herself with an incredible ardour in the assistance and the relieving of her needs; she was one of the first to run to the sheds and one of the last to return, even when she herself had caught the contagion.

One of the sisters, frightened upon seeing the epidemic's grave impact, (many of the sisters were on the verge of succumbing) expressed the fears of death she envisioned as inevitable to her. "Ah! My dear sister, she answered, why should we fear, will we not be very happy to die in this service and to give our lives to He who sacrificed His for us?"

As we have said, she was the last one at the SHEDS, she wanted to exhaust her last energy. After having given her services to the sick, she felt very tired and entered an apartment to rest a little. . . after this she did not return to the SHEDS and could not follow the Community's work but in languish. During this time, Our Father busied himself to test her with apprehensions and fears regarding death.

Here the good M.J. Richard is recalled to our memory. One day when she was at the SHEDS, she saw him standing by a window, with an air

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of pensiveness, absorbed by his reflection. His pale complexion and his beaten eyes made her judge him to be ill. She inquired about the state of his health, and the good father in a peaceful manner showed her a mass of coffins outside. “There, my sister, said he, are many coffins, and I do not know if ours are made yet. – They are not yet made, answered our sister Sainte Croix, but what is for sure, is that planks to make them have been sawed.” The good father made his way to these eternal pits and sighed. This excellent sister would not delay in leaving this earth either. . . .

Finally, our virtuous sister had to go to the infirmary, and said upon entering: “I will not leave this place.”

The good mother superior obliged her girl to ask for her recovery through the intercession of the glorious Saint Joseph. She did this obediently and in perfect abandonment of divine pleasure, exerting a great desire to go and enjoy Heaven in the presence of her divine Husband. One of our sisters saw her lips moving and leaned in with her ear: the dying pious sister was making orations such as this one: “Lord, do not enter into judgment of your servant. Lord, I have put my trust in you, I will not be confused.”

We recall that during the illness of this dear sister, a priest having come to receive the Holy Sacrament to bring to the ill, was strangely distracted; instead of leaving the house, he climbed up to the apartment where Sister Sainte Croix was and stopped for an instant in front of her bed only to continue the path he first intended to take. It has been said that Our Father was to bless his good and faithful servant.

Finally, July 31<sup>st</sup> marked the eternal destiny of the

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of the lamented sister Sainte Croix. She died on this day, at the age of thirty. We received word of a fact that truly deserves our attention. A young miss McDonnell, of this city, had known and valued the dear sister whom the Community was mourning at this time; she had accompanied her often to see the poor and ill and had applied herself like the sister in practicing good virtues. She had gone to the point of putting weights in her shoes, in order to suffer more during the course of her charity which she so loved doing. This young lady had obtained permission from her mother to accompany her friend, the nun, to the sheds and she had caught the contagion. So on July 31<sup>st</sup>, having greatly suffered, she suddenly called on her mother: "Oh! Mother, said-she, my sister Saint Croix has gone to Heaven." This pious lady took note of the time and immediately called on the Grey Nuns for news. She received an answer that Sister Sainte Croix had just died; and the two hours that they had confronted together in suffering contained at the same time a death and the vision of a good child.

This young lady died also, following without doubt in the steps of her venerated friend.

Good mother McMullen, is your chalice empty yet? Not yet. Hear the groans of an elderly nun. The lord will ask you for her, but she will be the last.

Sister Nobless, unable to be of service to the pestilent because of advanced age, wanted to replace Sister Marie (Barbeau) in the men's quarters. The care she gave to some of the elderly men who had gone to help at



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the ambulances, caused her to contract the pestilence. She died on August 4<sup>th</sup>, enriched by the virtues and merits of forty-six years in the religious profession. She was admirably gentle, her caring predilection given to the most ill.

Her great regularity only increased with age. She never wished to rely on her age for the exemptions and relaxations that would have been permitted to her. She had a genuine kind of politeness, and when young sisters offered to be of service to her, she thanked them graciously in adding that she was not only the servant of the poor, but also her own servant; that she had not come to religion to be served by others but rather to be of service to others. Thus she persevered until the age of seventy-two.

Profoundly touched by the tribulations of their Montreal sisters, the nuns of Saint Hyacinthe offered themselves in the service of the ill sisters. Mother McMullen thanked them with these words: "If we must all die at present, I wish for at least a trace of the Grey Nuns to remain, which is why I accept your offer of coming to our aid."

## CHAPTER V

## THE GENERAL HOSPITAL FACES ITS OWN EPIDEMIC

Sister Nobless' tomb had been closed, the last victim belonging to the Grey Nuns. The community is like a vast field in which a grain has fallen under the active sickle of the reaper.

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Still there are ears here and there, but inclined towards the earth by blows that have swooned them. The corridors are sombre, the different offices almost deserted, the exercise room, the novitiate and other remote apartments retain traces of the destructive plague; the places transformed into infirmaries have been the theatres of these late combats fought by our dear victims. Many sisters are still there held back by a delirium that afflicts those who approach. Alas! It is no longer sisters who go to the aid of their fellow nuns. Almost all are in need of others' assistance. Only a few individuals have escaped the contagious fever.

Notwithstanding the desert being created around the hospital, and despite the horror which naturally plagues those who approach those who have typhus, charitable women from the city, as well as many of the sisters' parents, eagerly cross the infirmary's threshold, to come save those who are so dear to them, and whose heroism they admire so much. The names of ladies Brault, Chalifoux and Melle Agnès Caron

have not been forgotten. . . . Everyone was so horrified by the house, according to the annals that we could barely find anyone to clean the clothing of the sick.

The hired have even abandoned us in order to not have to nail shut the coffins of sisters which we took the precaution to fill with lime.

A young man whom the sisters were protecting, was the only one who wished to offer his services. ( 1 ) In a dreary silence,

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( 1 ) Olivier Forget, died at the General Hospital after a few months of priesthood and was buried in the crypt of the former Mother House. He was brother to M. abbey Adolphe Forget, who died at Saint BONIFACE.

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interrupted from time to time by the groans of patients or by the multiple steps of their devoted caregivers, the house's regulation still works and goes by in its regularity like a soft harmony towards Heaven.

Let us admire the very elderly sister Hardy, curved by age: her gaze is fixed on the regulating dial. Not one minute, one second, escapes her, and her trembling hand agitates the enormous bells which announce outside as they do inside a reading or a prayer. Two or three sisters can barely answer their call and together they offer to God a homage which is agreeable to him.

The service of the poor is completely silenced no doubt, but the elderly hospital workers who are still capable can be found at their posts. These are sisters Chénier, Beaudry, Coutlée, etc., and as nurses, sisters Cherrier and Pagnuelo, the sacristan sister Youville and sister Normant in charge of expenses. Sister Hurley travels the streets with a novice or a postulant and her temporary asylum on McKay Street sees a growing number of orphans. We may perhaps believe that the alarming situation in which this community finds itself would distance novices who are on

probation from the novitiate, or that this generation of young girls would abandon their steps towards vocation in favour of their first inspiring attraction; we would be greatly mistaken, it is the contrary that we see happening.

Many postulants take the holy habit to the very core of the epidemic and a good number of very qualified young ladies come knocking on our door when the house offers only

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the cemetery as a prospect. It is among other sisters Maréchal, Sauvé, Dunn, Gabois et Christin (sister Marie), the latter having just taken her place as a nun, sister Christin, caught typhus and as a result her days are filled with danger. After this disastrous episode, many teenage girls from distinguished families in the city are inspired by the memory of what they had seen or had heard of these days, and seek to experience the vocation which made these heroines martyrs for themselves. Who could forget sisters Kollymer and Devins' entry into the novitiate, as well as so many others? . . . It has been remarked that since the days of typhus, the numbers of novices are growing. The General Hospital emerges as if from oblivion with the spirit of its institute that had always enjoyed maintaining it.

Mgr of Montreal and M. Billaudèle, seminary superior, deeply feel the community's desolation; they come from time to time bringing consolation to these veiled walls of sadness and mourning. The good father Larré, confessor, increases his efforts to bring paternal salvation to the poor, sick sisters. Chronicles speak of, on the

day of June 30<sup>th</sup>, the visit of condolences which the Governor General made to the community. His Excellence was accompanied by Lady Elgin, by his Highness Mgr Phelan, the Bishop of Kingston, by M. Billaudèle the seminary superior as well as several other distinguished people. Lord Elgin was very touched in learning that such a great number of sisters had succumbed as victims in their devotion.

Let us insert here the letter that mother McMullen wrote to Lady Elgin, daughter of Lord Durham, at the end of the following December:

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“Madam Countess,

“The days of the year which is now finishing have not always been days of desolation for us. There is one that our house will never forget; one which will not cease to count towards our most wonderful days: that which like an angel from Heaven you came with your illustrious Husband to console us in the midst of our desolations.

This day still gives joy to our orphans; they ask when another similar day will come to pass. Our elderly, our poor infirm forget their ailments and their weakness in the memory of your touching affability, and pray with all their hearts for the illustrious countess who was so good to them. Yes, Madam, on this day, the wishes of our entire community rise towards Heaven to conjure God who reigns for years and years to measure the number and goodness of yours on the ardour of our prayers, or even better on the eminent qualities which assure your person respect and affection, to the afflicted a counsellor, to the orphans a mother.

These are the wishes at the beginning of this new year of our house which you have made so happy; and would be twice as happy if you would accept them. But

nothing is lacking especially in goodness to her who has the honour to be, Madam  
Countess,

Your very humble servant,

(Signed) Sister McMullen, sup.” ( 1 )

Dec. 1847.

Divine Providence herself marked this period

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( 1 ) . . . “Since then, Lady Elgin, up until her departure for England in 1854, did not cease to give to our community particular marks of her esteem. It even came to pass that in being sick, she sent for remedies at the General Hospital, saying that she had great confidence in the preparations and in the medicine of the Sisters of Charity.”  
(Manuscript of Sr Baby, No 2.)

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with ordeals and it was from Heaven that the community received its salvation. Also, to achieve the extinction of the scourge, the good mother McMullen was inspired to make a novena to the Holy Virgin in Notre-Dame de Bonsecours. To this effect, she made known to the community the intention to have all but two sisters going each morning to hear mass at the saintly chapel; which they accepted happily.

Nevertheless, Monsignor adjourned these pilgrimages in anticipation that he himself, most pious Pontiff, could join in thanksgiving with the community after the cessation of the epidemic. We contented ourselves therefore in saying mass in the community church and burnt candles in the aging Bonsecours sanctuary.

The 12<sup>th</sup>, nevertheless, the sister commenced a novena to Saint Roch; the statue of Saint ROCH was place on the altar of the Chapel of the Eternal Father or of

the Holy Virgin. At one o'clock p.m. all went to the church, the poor and the children attending as well. It is since these days that a sister faithfully bears the name of sister St Roch.

Every year, at the anniversary of this great saint, the whole community gathers and burns candles all day before his portrait. At night, there is a farewell and the benediction of the Holy Sacrament.

CHAPTER VI  
THE CONVALESCENCE

The ray of sunshine that traverses the cross to descend into a sombre and obscure room is agreeable and invigorating. It

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makes the sick smile and everything around it is being reborn. The 26<sup>th</sup> of July, a day of hope-spreading joy in the community of the Grey Nuns. The doctors have noticed, with the exception of certain grave cases, that most of the sisters have begun to convalesce and that their prescriptions contain instructions of fresh air, both to have them regain strength and to preserve others from the fever.

The superiors respect this order and, despite a certain reluctance, devote themselves to seeing it through.

So an uncustomary move has taken place in different infirmaries, we must leave, prepare trunks, bring medicine, etc., and help the few who are still very weak to redress themselves in their holy habit. There are concerns . . . many, still slightly delirious, believe that they are abandoning the SHEDS. We have not forgotten the poor pestilent. How many times did we hear sick and dying sisters, believing themselves to still be in the sheds, screaming “Oh! They are unfortunate!. . . Oh! They are suffering!. . .” Their hearts still remained compassionate to the bedsides of those they had been forced to abandon. With haste, we prepare the equipment to be moved. . . Sister Mallet, assistant, will accompany thirteen of these good sisters to a house in the country. They are sisters Brault, Desjardins, Blondin, Youville, Chevrefils, Cinq Mars, Denis, Labrèche, Montgolfier, Dalpée, Caron, Perrin and others.



We had been occupying ourselves for some time with finding suitable lodging; the good Sulpicians offered their Saint-Gabriel farm; however we did not dare accept. Mgr Bourget nevertheless obliged the Grey Nuns to welcome this proposition and M. Villeneuve

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who had arranged this at his own cost, was happy.

It was thus towards Saint-Gabriel's farm, in other words the GREGORY house, that the excursion directed itself in this moment. We descended to a spacious residence surrounded by gardens, orchards, a pond: a veritable solitude where we breathed good air, such little distance from the mother house.

Eighteen or twenty beds and full furnishing meant that this dwelling was very comfortable. All was prepared by the good sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame, and at their cost.

These veritable girls of mother Bourgeois had offered their Saint PAUL's island for the recovery of our Grey Nuns; but employees upon hearing of this project, wanted to leave the island and abandon work on its soil. They would have agreed to the loss of their harvest, but Mgr BOURGET did not wish it; it is then that the Community accepted GREGORY's residence.

The Reverend Mother Ste Madeleine, Congregation superior, wishing to compensate the Grey Nuns for their agreeable sojourn on Saint PAUL's island, charged herself with cleaning and furnishing the lodging which they had accepted

from the Seminary. How this memory is still dear and alive in the hearts of the Grey Nuns.

The next day, the 27<sup>th</sup>, Father LARRE, went with haste to visit the new monastery of his spiritual women; he blessed it with pious solemnity in the midst of fervent prayers.

The 28<sup>th</sup>, R.M. Connoly, sulpician, went to offer the holy

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sacrifice of mass in this new sanctuary, where the sisters happily received his holy communion and the very Holy Sacrament resided among them. What thanksgiving and sighs were offered at the foot of the tabernacle prepared again by their benefactors.

The good and untiring mother McMULLEN visited her dear girls almost every day, and the gracious steward, mother Deschamps, abundantly supplied their table and provided for all their needs.

A horse and a vehicle were at the disposal of these convalescent sisters to have them go on excursions and to help to get provisions. On this topic, we would like to transcribe a few lines from the diary of sister OLIER, annalist of this time: “Among the little number of those whose fear of the contagion could not persuade them to keep away from us, we cannot forget our good and faithful gardener, Benjamin Gougeon, who, despite the terror which preyed on him of contracting this terrible illness, could never resolve himself to abandon us in this critical time. He was a good servant who came to stay with us at the Gregory farm, where he was of great help. . . .”

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, seven sisters of the GREGORY house found themselves strong enough to traverse the river and go restore themselves completely at the Chateauguay Manor. Others left the infirmary, still weak, replacing them at the Saint Gabriel residence.

At the island of Saint BERNARD, His Highness, Mgr BOURGET accorded us the

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T H E C O N V A L E S C E N C E

Benediction of keeping the very Holy Sacrament in our little chapel.

Slowly but surely strength returned to our convalescent; they became aware of their state and asked with anxiety for daily news especially of their companions whom they wished to see again; they went to the point of boasting about a perfect reunion. “At least, said sisters Brault and Desjardins, even if we caught TYPHUS, none of us succumbed to it.” Poor sisters, what are you saying? You must recall that seven (7) sisters have disappeared from your ranks, but console yourselves, they have taken their place in the army of martyrs and triumph gloriously in Heaven.

We have received word that sister Desjardins having suddenly learned of the Community’s painful losses in the past weeks, was so surprised and afflicted that we believed for a moment that these would cause this poor sister to die. All the time the epidemic lasted at the mother house, we took great precautions with the sick. As such, when sisters died, we did not ring the death knell. Prudence required us to complete the inhumation without delay, we sang but a LIBERA and we made sure to close the

doors of the holy place, and to maintain a great silence near the infirmaries, so that the other sick sisters remained ignorant of what could worry and afflict them.

August 12<sup>th</sup> and the days that followed, we sang in the church of the General Hospital for these regretted sisters. The assistance should be small. What prayers, what tears. . . . but at the same time what hope! What benediction for

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the institute of the venerated founding mother! . . . All these services were sung by the cantors of Notre-Dame church. The singers of the community were small in number. But, what happened outside the General Hospital, in the months of July and August, when we saw the sisters away from the fight? Did the epidemic cease? What actual movement is happening outside these walls?

We will see this in the following chapter, in borrowing to be more exact, from many excerpts of "Melanges Religieux."

## CHAPTER VII

## THE CLERGY'S HEROIC CHARITY

“Our Catholic clergy continues its career of devotion and sacrifice, in the midst of public disasters. Its ranks are enlightened as on the day of a great battle, but without scaring the survivors; intrepid soldiers, they content themselves with tightening their ranks to meet the enemy.

The old and venerated house of Saint Sulpice stood tall, without faltering from its familial traditions and its past glory. In the first days of this city, the blood of children dripped from the iron of the Iroquois, tyrants of this young church. They were martyrs of their apostolate. Their brothers today, inheriting their virtues, add to this glorious heritage, a title no less honourable, that of the martyrs of charity. Already five (5) among them have received their reward. Others are still fighting between life and death. FIVE (5) among them are in this moment out of the fight. These gaps in the ranks of our sacred battalion, deny us several powerful centres of action,

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but do not alter our courage; under the weight of these immense internal pains, we saw them forced to abandon care in the SHEDS. The needs of this city and especially the Irish population who the scourge is decimating in their own homes, absorb all the workers still on their feet. The Monsignor even called, to help them during this week, M. Girouard priest at Saint MARY's, M. Colgan priest of Saint ANDRE. The RR.PP.

MARTIN and SACHE, from the company of Jesus, offered themselves from the beginning to go and remain amongst them and share their work as the needs had become urgent. The Monsignor had called them, with haste, to him for the service of the house's priests. Since MM. the Sulpicians were obliged to abandon the SHEDS, Mgr BOURGET took over immediate administration. Already on several occasions, the illustrious and venerable prelate appeared in the breach to give of himself in the hour of combat and danger. The general became a soldier and wanted to fight in the frontline.

Pain and misfortune, everywhere where they may be found, have rights over his apostolic heart. The Monsignor already organized two orphanages, one for boys on St Catherine Street, and the other for girls in the new house of Bon Pasteur, on BARON Hill. More than TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY children were collected. These were the sad but interesting debris that the devastating scourge left in passing through the town, which was received with love.

The Monsignor is admirably assisted in this life of

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Devotion and sacrifice by the Grand Vicar Hudon and the Canon M. Truteau, M. REY, the Jesuit Father Duranquet, M. Charland priest of Saint-Clement of Beauharnois, M. Hughes missionary of Ottawa and M. Pominville vicar of Chambly, all came at the invitation of the Bishop, to lend their help.

We must add to these names those of M. RESTHER principal of Joliette College, M. Lafrance priest of Saint Aimé, M. Mercier priest of Saint Vincent of Paul and M. Saint Germain priest of Saint Laurent.

They all took turns to spend time in the SHEDS to baptise, confess and administer to the sick. Day and night, there were always priests amongst them and none died without receiving religion's salvation. A good number of our alienated brothers asked in these final hours to enter into the Church's bosom.

It is devotion and heroism that would require a way other than ours. We already understand the charity, the need to sacrifice on the part of our excellent sisters, but their lives taken from them in the shadows often took with them their secret. It penetrated their interior and followed them in their humble suffering where they were to take the alms of the rich in the consolation of faith, to uncover the mystery. They prepared themselves for even greater battles. They finally emerged from their retreat, these timid girls, these weak and delicate women, and advanced intrepidly into the theatre of death with more joy than experienced in pleasure.

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June 9<sup>th</sup>, EIGHT Grey Nuns

and FIVE women leave

for the SHEDS.

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The horrors of the illness, the dangers of the contagion and the spectacle of death, far from intimidating them, excited their courage. Their ranks go out to illuminate, seven Grey Nuns have already exerted their last sighs; twenty-one are still within death's grip.

At the house of Providence, TWELVE sisters are in their sick beds. Those that the scourge has spared until now have not slowed their march for an instant or diminished their daily visits to the SHEDS. Before going to their sick, they give every morning to their dying sisters, in a farewell full of love and faith, and hope, a rendez-

vous for eternity. The crown descending onto their heads appears to them more beautiful than ever, as it is that of martyrs of charity.

Dignified emulators of their virtues and of their devotion, they return in the evening to console others in their distance from the combat, by the story of those who perpetuate their heroism; or, they come pray near a coffin . . . or finally, struck by their exhaustion, spread themselves tranquilly on their beds of pain, like an all-powerful and all-loving soldier, the reward of their charity, their sacrifices and the glorious crown of immortality.

“MELANGES RELIGIEUX, July 30<sup>th</sup> 1847.”

NOTE RELEVANT TO THE PREVIOUS LINES, EXCERPTED  
TEXTUALLY FROM “THE REVUE CANADIENNE OF July 30<sup>th</sup> 1847.”

New priests rush to the SHEDS where they replace each other until the end of the epidemic. These are, during the month of July:

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M. MARTINEAU priest of Saint Martha, M. LIONNET priest at Saint Martin’s; during the month of August M. HICKS Vicar at Saint Valentine, M.J. LAROCQUE superior at the Saint-Hyacinthe Seminary, M. DESAULNIERS philosophy professor at Saint-Hyacinth, M DALLAIRE priest of RIGAUD, M. J.J. PRINCE missionary from the Eastern Townships of Saint-Laurent.

At the end of August, M. LECLAIR serving at Stanbridge, M. Saint-AUBIN of the Saint-Therese Seminary, M. PELLETIER vicar at Saint Gregory’s, M. MONET



priest at Berthier. In September, M. CREVIER priest of Saint-Pierret an M.G. THIBAUT priest of Saint-Jerome.

As we have said, Mgr Bourget, is at the head of the apostolic movement. . . He is the first to action. . . He confesses, administers the dying and baptizes little children. We see him from time to time serving the sick as would a simple nurse, and at the peril of his life, he goes in the obscurity of night, drawing water from the river to quench the thirst of the sick or to wash their clothes and on top of all of this to administer the most repulsive services.

At the beginning of August, the sickness seemed to be less ravaging. We were already rejoicing the construction of new shelters that the honourable M. Casgrain, minister of public works, had built quite a distance from the town, on Point Saint-Charles. This improvement in site is more favourable to doctors and nuns who are constantly by the side of the sick, their forces still sustained.

Nevertheless the scourge did not yet slow and death did not further respect the new ministries of the Lord. It deigned

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even to hit the right arm of our pious Pontiff. It was the grand vicar Mgr Hyacinth HUDON who succumbed on August 12<sup>th</sup> at the slightly more advanced age of fifty-five years old. This loss was followed by that of M. Thomas COLGAN, priest of Saint Andre, aged of only thirty-two years, excellent priest who distinguishes himself mostly by the prudence of his zeal and the ardour of his charity.

On August 13<sup>th</sup>, Mgr Bourget wrote a pastoral letter in which he made known the groans which ripped from him the spectacle of the scourge which beat the Episcopal town. It deplores the losses which its clergy had just endured, in its

religious communities and among its people. It looks to console itself in consoling others by the thoughts of its faith. It ended its paternal heart's beautiful effusion by calling on the Virgin Mary to save its menaced town and promised all its efforts in the re-establishing of a pious pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de BONSECOURS, which, "by the misfortune of time, no longer resembles its former self". . . To put "in the place of this holy image which our fathers worship with so much respect, which in punishment of the devotion disappearing ( 1 ) from your temple, the golden bronze statue ( 2 ) which I have just had made in Paris, and which was solemnly blessed at the altar of archiconfrery, in the church which was dedicated to you under the title of Notre-Dame of VICTORY.

---

( 1 ) This statue was about six to eight inches in height. It was made of brown wood and was a remarkable piece. Two virtuous and rich brothers, MM. The Priest, lords of Fleury, in France, in the castle from which it was in great veneration for more than ONE HUNDRED years, gave it to us in 1672, to be placed in the sanctuary especially consecrated to the Holy Virgin, at Ville MARIE. Sister BOURGEOIS was charged with bringing it to Canada. In 1754, it was retired in a state of perfect conservation, in the middle of the ashes and of rubble of the BONSECOURS chapel which had

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been thoroughly destroyed by a disastrous incident. Placed in the actual chapel, built in 1772, it was stolen during the winter of 1831, and up until now, all efforts that have been put in place in the way of finding it remain fruitless.

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( 2 ) The solemn installation of this statue was only done on May 21<sup>st</sup> of the following year, because of the restoration being completed in the chapel of Notre-Dame de Bonsecours, which generous donations united to the care of the poor, allowed for the dignified receipt of the image of the protector of Ville-Marie.

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It was a Sunday, a compact crowd invaded the vast naves of Notre-Dame where the statue was deposited. After the preliminary ceremonies, this multitude formed its procession, and began our march towards Bonsecours.

The stretcher on which the statue was transported was surrounded by the festooning silver gauze on tender green silk. The garland of little roses spread in the leafage, ran throughout the festoons. Beautiful lilies rose around the statue to form above the head of the virginal diadem. The statue now in place, Mgr Bourget had a crowning with magnificent ceremonies which were observed in Rome when one wanted to designate a people those saintly images of the Virgin which God had wanted to serve to accord signalled favours.

“Under the inspiration which evidently came to all, Oh Mary! I have had engraved on the pedestal, this devoted invocation which the Church addresses to you: “Ora pro populo, interveni pro clero.” Which in this sad moment like our cries of pain and the momentum of our hearts seeks to obtain your salvation in our pressing need. This image will attest to the most remote posterity in which you have once again showed that you are truly our Mother.

For this badge of favour will never erase itself from the memory of inhabitants in this town and this diocese, I promise you exposition in this sanctuary where you have established your home, in

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Ex voto, a painting representing the typhus seeking to enter the city but stopped at the gate by your strong protection.” ( 1 )

Alas! The Pastor like the troupe must be equally hit. . . Monsignor caught the contagion. It was a general pain . . . What will become of the poor emigrants to whom he opened his arms with such grand commiseration? What will become of Montreal, this city so dear to his heart, which grows day by day and whose religious prosperity honours its high and saintly administration?

Heaven nevertheless has not darkened itself in offering a day full of hope. After several weeks of suffering, the holy pontiff began to recover. He was conserved by the veneration of these diocesans and he lived for several years for their happiness and to advance further and further the reign of God in their souls. ( 2 )

Many priests nevertheless, caught typhus. The reverend Jesuit Father Driscoll, from the New York house, is included in this number. He recovered after several weeks of cruel suffering.

The zealous religious from the company of Jesus who had come to aid our Canadian clergy during their vacation, returned

( 1 ) This painting is that which we see in the middle of the chapel of Notre-Dame de Bonsecours. It represents the sisters occupied in the salvation of the poor emigrants spread on the ground. To the right, at the top of the painting, we see the Virgin Mary interceding on behalf of the city.

( 2 ) August 7<sup>th</sup>, Mother McMULLEN wrote to Mgr Bourget: . . . “I am sending to your Highness a note from the sisters who were sick, since June 20<sup>th</sup> until today. Thirty-six sisters (36), twenty-eight (28) of which had caught typhus, of which seven (7) died. Of the (28) who caught typhus, we have but two (2) that can offer us service. – Other people have been attacked by typhus: ten (10) girls, two of which died. Four (4) men, one (1) of which died. Sixteen (16) children (16), twelve (12) of which died.

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towards the end of August, in New York, to restart, without more rest, the work of their school year. Father Tellier is the only one that the superior could leave amongst us, to help the priests of Montreal in their actual work. The sanitary state of the city, towards the end of August, was improving slightly. . . . On the other hand, the state of the poor sick in the sheds is only worsening. There are still 1304 pestilent in the shelters. Every twenty-four hours there are around twenty-seven (27) dying. The good Catholics of Montreal tirelessly accepted the incessant task which it pleased God to send them. They feel that the celestial Father does not dwell his hand on them for any other reason but to have them approach closer to the eternal kingdom; also these good citizens love running to churches to pray with fervour and confidence. It is to Notre-Dame de Bonsecours that they go assiduously; it delays them in their celebration of the inauguration of the pious statue. Oh! How they hope for all from Mary. Montreal is the city very dear to the Holy Virgin . . . . She once consecrated it, and the good Catholics have not forgotten it.

The typhus does not exclusively exert its ravages on Montreal and on Quebec, which nevertheless continue to be the center and the foyer of the pestilence. Ottawa and Toronto submit equally to its malign influence. The Irish emigrants searched under American skies for a homeland . . . . Alas! These unfortunate pilgrims often stopped before reaching their goals, and they find in our Canadian cities, a door always open to the most Christian hospitality. "We are utterly alarmed, say public papers during the month of August, by the excess

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of fatigue and the state of the illness of Toronto priests.

“Mgr POWER is alone in sustaining the burden of the ministry in his Episcopal city, where seven or eight hundred sick seek his aid.”

A letter from Ottawa addressed to a newspaper editor, on the date of September 21<sup>st</sup>, will describe the scene afflicting the poor emigrants of this city.

“The reverend Father DANDURAND, Oblate missionary of IMMACULATE Mary, after more than three weeks of feverous typhoid contracted in the care of the migrants, displays now more sensitivity. We can announce to his numerous friends that he is in full convalescence.

“The R.P. TELMON, O.M.I., superior of the Ottawa mission, caught a light indisposition. The RR. PP. BEAUDRAND and MOLLOY who descended to Longueuil, are on the path to recovery. The RR. PP. LAGIER, RYAN and TITZ-HENRY are in very good health.

“For the Grey Sisters, if you wish to know their devotion which is without boundaries and always inalterable, these surviving notes collected at the source, give us a small idea.

“There is at BYTOWN ELEVEN SWORN from this excellent community, four novices and five postulants, in total TWENTY sisters. In this number, there were but FIVE who have not yet passed from the cruel claws of typhus. There is even now, we regret to say, still FOUR sick sisters professes: mother BRUYERE, superior, who will soon be, I hope, convalescent, sister RIVET, LEBLANC, JONES called Saint-PIERRE, who nevertheless began to feel better. Thank God, not the priests, not the sisters, they are not dead at Bytown. We

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attribute this unexpected goodness, firstly to the incessant prayers which were made, following, in the way of divine Providence, to the cares and the skill of doctor Vancourtlands, native of Quebec, which he glorifies, and to the pure and rare air of the heights of Bytown.

“Now, a glance on the general sanitary state of BYTOWN. Since last June 15<sup>th</sup>, there were illnesses, as many in the General Hospital of the Grey Nuns, as in the shelters and in the town, regularly, an average of 200 sick. At the hospital, the number of sick always ranged from FIFTY-FIVE to SIXTY. Since the said date, there entered in the hospital: in the month of June, ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVEN (111) sick; in the month of July, one hundred and EIGHTY-TWO (182) in the month of August, and to now, ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SEVEN (167) which totalled FOUR HUNDRED AND SIXTY (460). One hundred and forty (140) people died in the hospital; ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY (160) in the shelters and ONE HUNDRED (100) in the city; a grand total of: FOUR HUNDRED. (400)

At this time, there are still the same numbers of sick in the hospital as usual; but there was a notable diminution in the shelters and in the city.

“When you know what this little town of BYTOWN is, especially when you know that the Rideau Canal was closed for the whole summer, you cannot help but be surprised at the considerable number of emigrants that passed through here. But know that these poor unfortunates, dispersed in the surrounding countryside out of need,

were brought back to Bytown by the illness. Know also, that the good and charitable habitants of Prescott, to rid themselves of these dangerous hosts and under the pretext that we have here a

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hospital and shelters, shipped us over one hundred of them.”



## CHAPTER VIII

## THE RETURN

The crickets chirping, the beautiful days of summer, July and August passed in a whirl of flowers and haymaking. The heat was intense, but the harvest was excellent. All rejoiced in Heaven's benedictions.

At the old Chateauguay manor, the convalescent sisters had a beneficial rest; with the care delicately lavished upon them by the good mother DESCHAMPS, their steward.

But the focus turned towards the mother house. . . we waited for the sisters with haste; the elderly saddened to see their ranks lightened, it delays them from embracing those who survived the features of the envenomed plague.

September 13<sup>th</sup> finally reunited the entire community, it was the dawn of a grand day; Oh! How the celebration of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross happily arrived on this day. Generous girls of the Mother of Youville, lovers of the cross like her, you will in suffering and in pain spread your seed, but you return on this grand day carrying the sheaves in your hands.

It was an outpouring of joy and in such grand contentment of reuniting in the same dwelling, they joined in songs of thanksgiving.

On Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup>, the whole community reunited at the Church after dinner. At the end of the MISERERE and other prayers of use, the superior sang the TE DEUM to thank the Lord for the cessation of the plague in the house. We continued with no less

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fervour in the following days, the prayers of a novena which began on the 12<sup>th</sup> to implore once again the protection of Heaven, because typhus had not yet abandoned this land. It is still rampant in the SHEDS, and even in the city.

We count at this time more than eight hundred sick in the ambulances, we are working on rendering the shelters capable of being inhabited during the winter.

The good sisters of Providence, who had replaced their Grey Nuns, are beginning to buckle under the strain. THIRTY-TWO caught typhus. THREE (3) cruelly succumbed to its embraces: it is the regretted sisters Angelina BELOUIN, Catherine BRADY, and Olympe GUY.

The ambulances will face for a second time a shortage of staff. Who will now take care of all these poor emigrants?

The sisters of the Hotel-Dieu have themselves succumbed to the losses of their regretted sisters Gertrude POIRIER, Sophia DARCHE and Mary Josephine PORTELANCE, as well as patients amongst them. . . . especially the devoted priests who had caught the contagion in caring and administering to the pestilent! How the good Sulpicians they saw die as well as many other members of the clergy, are the object of their respect and their filial esteem! Oh! Why fear! No, my poor and unfortunate Irish brothers will never be abandoned. The Grey nuns are still steps away. . . A little bit of rest will give them new strengths. . . Their courage has stayed

the same; they will fly again to this foyer where an ignited Christian charity still burns.

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The voice of the first pastor makes itself heard as follows.

But before definitively hearing this voice so humble and confident of this holy Bishop, the Grey nuns have to answer to a charitable call no less dignified than that of their vows.

“Towards this time, according to the annals, the captain WEATHERLY, intendant of the emigrants, came to the community accompanied by M. Ryan, commissioner, to ask if they would accept the poor widows and girls of emigrants. The community accepted this proposition and since September 3<sup>rd</sup>, two of the sisters went to visit the house situated on the land of Saint-GABRIEL’s farm, near the path which goes towards the Saint-PIERRE river, and they began immediately, helped by the poor widows and girls who came to them, to clean this house that they had opened the 17<sup>th</sup> of the same month.”

It was Sister HUGHES who had first opened this asylum; we saw afterward the sister of Saint ROCH, CINC-MARS and DALPEE. From Saint-Gabriel’s farm, this asylum was transferred to Saint-Laurent Street, where the sisters continued this excellent task until the month of April 1848. On this date, we were successful in conveniently facilitating all the poor widows and girls to go out and earn their own living.

CHAPTER IX  
THE GREY NUNS ONCE AGAIN TAKE OVER  
MANAGEMENT OF THE SHEDS

September 26<sup>th</sup> 1847, the Grey Nuns directed themselves again towards the paths leading to POINT SAINT-CHARLES.

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(40) But before continuing our story, let us insert the following lines from a copy conserved in the archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal.

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NOTES TAKEN  
FROM THE ARCHIVES  
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MONTREAL

(1915) . . . . . “September 26<sup>th</sup> 1847, The Grey Nuns return to the sheds, after an absence of TWO AND A HALF MONTHS, caused by the illness and the mortality that took place in the house. During this time there was no lodging prepared for the sisters, as such they returned every night to sleep in the community. After around one month, we housed them in the upper story of SHED No 10, TWO clean enough apartments, where we gave them everything they needed for a small lodging, except the beds which they provided themselves. Upon their arrival, they began in devotion the execution of the project already in place for them, to erect a chapel in the enclosure, for the consolation of the poor convalescents and for the use of the nurses employed in the service of the sick, the number of which was FIFTY-SEVEN (57): they saw themselves (nurses and doctors. . .) in their multiple occupations and

distance from churches, the closest of which was a half a mile away, estranged from the salvation of religion. These brave people organized a collection amongst themselves and placed what they collected in the hands of the sisters of Providence who were there at the time. Even the Canadian workers who, touched by the state of spiritual and corporal privation of these poor unfortunates, wanted to contribute to this great work through their alms. These men were employees, under the direction of M. F. Trudeau, working to construct the different buildings which were necessary to add to the sheds. This collection

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was far from being sufficient to provide the projected chapel the absolutely necessary effects for the celebration of the mysterious saints, but his Highness Mgr of Montreal begged the others and provided all that was necessary so that the holy sacrifice of mass could be celebrated with all possible decency. Yet, with the permissions and the consent which had been given to SHED (No 8) to make the chapel; more than once they wished to retract their word and prevent the workers from working, saying that there were nine or ten others that were empty. . . ( 1 ) Once, among other times, Doctor CRAWFORD went to prevent the employees working on the chapel from continuing their work, and had the beds of the sick brought up to the door, resolute to have them placed within. Work was stopped and suspended for THREE days, at the end of which there was a counter-order regarding the complaints which had been made to M. Casgrain, and the chapel was completed despite the attempted molestations during construction made by people interested in the part of commissioners and doctors. October 3<sup>rd</sup>, it was blessed by his Eminence Mgr of Marianapolis who said its first mass and an English discourse, suitable for the

touching circumstances. Many of these unfortunates spilled tears in hearing for the first time, on strange soil, the affectionate and sympathetic words addressed to them from such a good heart, this dignified man representing a friend to these poor and unfortunate. These tears fell in torrents, when they heard resonate in the modest temple the voice of sisters accompanied by their little orphans singing to rejoice these hearts drowning in pain, their national hymn of Saint Patrick; it was a contrast

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

OF THE ARCHDIOCESE

OF MONTREAL

for them, who had long since only heard the groans of death and the sighs of the moribund. Since then, mass was regularly celebrated daily. Until October 18<sup>th</sup>, the SHEDS were served by passing priests; but since this day, the Jesuits RR. PP. TELLIER and SCHEANSKY and a third Irish priest, M. O'MALY, were there constantly all winter long. It is impossible to explain the zeal, the charity and especially the eternal bounty they deployed in favour of these unfortunates. The almost continuous vexations and crudeness they had to endure at the hand of these employees was never enough to have them retreat even a single step with regards to their devotion. . . .”

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( 1 ) Mr Barrett,

There is a great deal of unnecessary expense gone into with No 6, which was allowed to be used as a temporary chapel when not wanted as a ward, and will in all probability be required as a ward. The directions which were that it should be cased like one of these other wards and half used as a chapel, as long as it

could be spared and the other half a store. It is all new fitted up in a permanent manner contrary to the instructions, at great expense.

Jas. Crawford, M.D., Commiss.

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THE GREY NUNS IN THE SHEDS ONCE AGAIN

This time, it is no longer an aviary that goes to combat in the shelters; this aviary has taken its flight towards Heaven; but there are still the living that were wrecked from this disastrous epidemic. All tottering, they return once again with courage towards their poor sick.

It is mother DESCHAMPS who directs this small band . . . up until present she had always been held far away from the center which has given matter to her devotion; the construction work held her back in Chateauguay. Today, she offers herself in ardour to a work that is dear to her faith and her charity. Sister Blondin will assist her with all the strength which she has yet to deploy, as well as the courageous novices Dalpée and Montgolfier, as they are ardent in their will to return to their lives full of activity in the debris where they had worked until all their strength evaporated, and also, had they not acquired the habit of all the details of provenance repeating themselves in daily care?. . . There is nevertheless in these actualities things still too moving for their hearts to endure. Those who have been following these events for a long time will remember still with tenderness the distressing impression of every morning, when they arrived at the shelters, in seeing carts filled with coffins slowly

passing in the direction of the cemeteries in the early hours of the morning. They still see the mass of tombs prepared daily to receive new victims. Death lingered continually over the ambulances like an imprisoned shadow enveloping all those who dared penetrate it.

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It should be nevertheless noted that during this second period, the illness embraced a great number of priests and sisters who continued to devote themselves to such a good cause; but all triumphed and none died, while many returned twice after their convalescence to offer their services. The sky had accepted the victims who had succumbed during the first period: NINE priests and THIRTEEN SISTERS; the sword was returned to its sheath. The Lord was satisfied. He had authorized this holocaust. The benedictions of our celestial Father have been spread across this city, across this country, but especially in our pious communities.

The hour of anguish and of great pains is nevertheless still upon the city of TORONTO. Not only has its clergy fallen into the embrace of the contagion, but the eminent Pastor will pay his person as tribute which seems to have been reclaimed by the disastrous scourge.

Mgr POWER contracted typhus in saving the emigrants with a zeal above all those in the lodging and succumbed in this admirable devotion, at the still young age of forty-three.

Let us see here a few lines traced in his praise: it will be a pious memory to conserve of this holy bishop.

“Mgr POWER, following the example of Charles Borromée, of the BELZUNCES, of the QUEYLEN and of all those holy priests for whom we still



mourn, Mgr Power said to himself in the hour of danger: the catholic priest does not hide; he said to himself: always a catholic priest is the first in a time of epidemic to offer himself in the salvation of the unfortunate. He had witnessed in his Episcopal city the arrival of an emigration of unfortunate Irish fleeing from a homeland which only offered them death. He saw them sprawled on straw, suffering, in agony, dying. . . I saw them attacked by the contagious illness, and he said to himself: "HERE I AM MY CHILDREN!" . . .

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and FIVE women leave

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"Alone to bring salvation to the eight hundred sick, he wanted to multiply himself in sorts; he directed himself towards them, he lowered himself to them, and said: "I am your brother, do not fear, I will take care of you and your children." And he brought them their salvation and he received the confession of their faults and he opened the door to Heaven for them. And what did he get from it, you may ask us? Death! . . . Nevertheless, that is not all; these unfortunates reconciled with God have children, and their eyes are directed towards them; they will abandon them, and these unfortunate children, what will become of them? We will care for them, was the answer of the holy Bishop; we will collect them, we will warm them in our bosoms, and these children will be our children! But, alas! It was not enough for them to have lost their father and their mother; they have just lost their adopted father! Will they soon find a new pontiff to replace the one they mourn for with us, will they soon have a new pontiff who, happier than the one that just left them, can really accomplish his

promise: "These will be my children." He will continue in this way his predecessor's task and in attaching himself by following the example set by this lustrous bishop and in possessing the same virtues as him, he will be able to replace him in dignity and be certain to become a bishop according to the Lord's spirit."

Mgr Prince, coadjutor of Montreal, having caught the epidemic, is directed to the Hotel-Dieu and receives the final rights. Heaven has nevertheless conserved this eminent prelate, the future bishop of Saint Hyacinth.

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100<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE VERY HONORABLE MOTHER  
OF YOUVILLE'S ENTRANCE INTO THE GENERAL HOSPITAL:

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Despite the obstacles which the Community of the Grey Nuns

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underwent in this time of communal affliction, the ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF the very honourable Mother YOUVILLE's entrance into the General Hospital has arrived. It is an anniversary for which we have long since been preparing for. Two sisters of Saint Hyacinth and THREE from Ottawa head towards Montreal to take part.

The very Holy Sacrament was exposed during the Community's mass, which was celebrated by Mgr Brought, Bishop of Montreal, Mgr Prince gave the benediction of the Holy Sacrament and delivered a discourse that was very touching on the object of this solemnity.

At 4p.m., there was a ceremonial greeting in thanksgiving, and at night, to finish this familial anniversary, Mother McMULLEN distributed medallions and memorable images of this happy anniversary.

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CHAPTER X  
CHALLENGES

Christians, according to the apostle Paul, have the right to find glory in their tribulations, because patience is proof of fidelity, proof in the form of hope, and this hope can never be confounded.

Here is this house where this virtue of patience will be put to the test, strange tribulations await the sisters in these places where they labour anew in their devotion and in their heroic charity.

The first challenge is the illness which struck their ranks very suddenly, barely eight days had passed since the good mother Deschamps fell into the embrace of the epidemic. October 14<sup>th</sup>, she even received

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and FIVE women leave

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the final rights, in addition to Sister DUNN. The sisters will miss the saintly direction of this good mother, they know that in all circumstances, she was of great help and a veritable support, because they have already understood the current position of their new roles in the sheds.

The sisters' absence lasted THREE MONTHS, during which there was a change in personnel. A great number of Protestants circulated in the shelters, and saw with an envious eye the happy catch that the charity and selflessness of our sisters and priests were making daily. A great number converted to Catholicism. Children especially were collected with care to be placed in good families.

Many became hostile. The first chief clerk M. Wilson and his wife will serve well in their country places; it is a small war for which they are preparing against the sisters who defend themselves with religious discretion and an admirable patience.

The modest chapel placed in the center of the ambulances is an object of horror for our alienated brothers. The doctors do all they can to change the destination of this humble sanctuary, on the pretext that with such a great number of emigrants, this apartment is necessary for service; but the divine Providence does not permit that poor convalescents be denied the great consolation of hearing holy mass, or denied being able to go and pour out their pain at the foot of the tabernacle.

In revenge, we spy on the ways of and manners of action of those we accuse of proselytizing, and we want to catch them in their flagrant crime.

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We made a habit of uniting the catholic employees every night, in order to recite together the rosary and prayers, after which those who are elderly retire.

While one night, M. Wilson was visiting the SHEDS, he took notice that the nannies and nurses were absent; he went to notify Doctor LITTLE, who was malcontent, and joined M. WILSON to lock the chapel. The following day, he disallowed all people who were staying up, from going to prayer and made a rule which prescribed that every morning, at SIX o'clock, everyone had to be by the bedsides of the sick to guard them with the same assiduity until EIGHT o'clock every night, obliging therefore the sisters to discontinue their exercises of pious Christianity. A letter from Mgr BOURGET came to console the sisters:

“Montreal, October 22<sup>nd</sup>

1847”

“My Reverend Mother,

I address to you, here included, a copy of a letter which I have addressed to Doctor CRAWFORD, so that you may be aware of what is happening in the SHEDS to be able to direct the sisters accordingly. If this letter produces its desired effect, you will profit from obtaining the reforms which you know to be necessary, and which you had signalled in your last letter.

It seems to me that your CHEMIN DE CROIX which is in Point Saint-Charles could be lent as a chapel for the SHEDS if you do not see any inconvenience, you will let me know, so that

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“in a few days I can go and erect in this field of pain the path which leads to Calvary.

Your sisters who are daughters of the Cross will profit from enduring the painful route which they need to uphold.

“I am sincerely, my reverend Mother,

“Your humble servant,

(Signed) + Ig. Bi. Of Montreal.”

To the Reverend Mother McMULLEN, supr.”

Here follows a copy of the letter mentioned in the preceding page:

“Montreal, October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1847

“Mister, (Doctor Crawford)

“In permitting the sisters of Charity from the diverse institutions of this city to devote themselves to the care of the poor Irish emigrants which the government is having cared for in the barracks of this city, I had the intention of assisting the goodwill of the Commissioners which were appointed as administrators.

“I dare to hope that the sisters have expressed their devotion, full of duty that charity imposes on them, and merit by their conduct the confidence of the aforesaid commissioners.

“Knowing the zeal with which you work to dignify the corporal interest of the sick retained in the hospitals of Point St Charles, I take the liberty of soliciting your intervention to obtain a greater liberty to exercise their charity from the OFFICE in the favour of these sisters.

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“It will be necessary that, by the word of some of these sisters, we give either to the sick, or to the nurses and servants, all the things which they judge necessary to have food and other needs allotted. I can assure the Commissioner that the sisters are intelligent enough to not do anything contrary to the general good of the hospital, and conscious enough to not cost the government useless expenditures. If it is judged not appropriate to give them this liberty, I ask that they be at least permitted to distribute the goods which they derive from charitable people in the city who will miss their donations if provisions are to be provided only by the government for the sick and the employees of the SHEDS.

“Permit me, Sir, to say to you with frankness that it is to be feared what would happen if we do not soon impress on the government the odiousness of having let the

thousands of unfortunates suffer, regardless of what it did for them in terms of enormous expenses.

“Knowing that I am writing to a gentleman, I would prefer to trust with him this very reflection as opposed to throwing it into the city where we would not hesitate in blaming the diverse administrators charged with watching over the various interests of the poor unfortunates.”

“I have the honour of being, etc.”

(Signed) + Ignace, Bi. of Montreal.”

Another annoyance will appear and fuel M. WILSON’S determination in diminishing the number of nurses; he asks the

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sisters to make a list of those who seem to them the most useless. . . and in thanking these women, he takes great care to tell them that these will be the sisters he discharges. Strongly disconcerted, these nurses go to find the doctors and tell them that the sisters wished to send them away because they do not go to their evening prayer and because they do not go to confession. (These are catholic women as it were). So the doctors listen to their complaints, and redirect these nurses to their posts and dismiss other nurses whom it would have given them great pleasure to have by them.

Doctor LITTLE, learning that the sisters wanted to make known to the Monsignor of Montreal their present situation, went to tell them impertinently:



“Monsignor solved nothing in the ambulances, the government did him a great favour in permitting his priests and his sisters to come assist the sick. The government alone has authority in all this.”

Other mutinous details on subjects of little importance would confirm that the sisters had to practice acts of patience and humility. In seeing that sheets were being taken from the communal cloakroom to change the bedding or clothing of the poor patients paralyzed by the cold, the assistant saw a contravention to his authority, and brought back without the knowledge of the sisters some of the clothing they had given. Thankfully R.P. TELLIER did not close his eyes to these every day inconveniences; he spoke of it to the Monsignor, His Eminence voiced his considerable displeasure, and with haste made a complaint to the governor.

A few days later, captain CREDERLY arrived at the SHEDS

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with an authority which brought fear to WILSON and company; he announced that if he and his wife continued to lack respect for the sisters, they would both be chased from the shelters.

The following day, there was nothing other than civility and submission towards those he had wished yesterday to submit to his authority alone.

This little persecution added to the physical exhaustion of the barely convalescent sisters. Young postulants come to their aid. These were witness to their goodwill in practicing their vocation in this admirable exercise of charity. The good mother McMULLEN trusted all these novices to R.P. TELLIER, Jesuit, who had them follow the exercise of their novitiate with a paternal solicitude.

Sister DALPEE exerts great energy: she caught typhus twice; she sustained the suffering without succumbing and, after a short convalescence, she appeared for a third time in the SHEDS. . . Also she won honour in receiving the cross of her religious profession. It should be noted that the ELEVEN (11) novices who took on the holy habit in these days when we started to care for the pestilent happily preserved their saintly vocation. THREE received the martyr's crown, sisters COLLINS, LIMOGES and PRIMEAU, and the EIGHT (8) others pronounced their religious vows with solemnity at the term of their probation: these were Sisters Saint-JOSEPH (Denis), CHRISTIN, LABRÈCHE, CARON, BLONDIN, MONTGOLFIER, DALPEE and PERRIN

When mother DESCHAMPS, having caught the contagion, left the SHEDS, the untiring mother McMULLEN, finding no one to replace her, asked for help from the house of OTTAWA, which was not in any better condition than that of Montreal, since the

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good sisters, as we saw above, were also caring for the pestilent in the ambulances of their city. Mother BRUYÈRE, superior of the Ottawa house, did not delay in sending sister PHELAN ( 1 ), and the mother house could never sufficiently appreciate the services this sister offered; her action full of firmness and prudence was necessary in the present situation. The sisters respected and loved her, we feared nothing by her side. Sister Montgolfier still remembers the cold-bloodedness of this courageous sister

in worrying circumstances. It was November 24<sup>th</sup> at 11 o'clock in the evening; a steamboat charged with three hundred (300) sick came from GROSSE ISLE, arriving at the port. We sent as many vehicles as we could procure and the doctors directed themselves at the same time with stretchers to help transport the sick. When we saw the disembarkation of the ship we realized that out of THREE HUNDRED SICK disembarking in Quebec, more than eighty had died

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( 1 ) September 29<sup>th</sup>, sister Bruyère wrote to Mother McMULLEN . . . . .  
 “To offer you service, there is nothing we would not do. You are too good to us, we would never refuse you anything. It is therefore with great pleasure that we will have leave next Monday (4), my sister PHELAN and my sister CURRAN, sister Assistance with accompany them. I cannot flatter myself in saying that my sister PHELAN will have the same success as the good sister St PATRICE; but I can hope, and I have the intimate conviction that she saves nothing for herself. She will need the assistance of our council, but I am persuaded that in that she will not be lacking. She will not have the time to learn very much, but in compensation, you will have your poor praying for God to compensate her. Therefore, you may depose of her as your see fit. My sister CURRAN can also be of use to you for English amongst the sick, but she is more in need of her novitiate than sister PHELAN, nevertheless do not hesitate to take her when you judge it appropriate. My sister JOSEPH has just brought to my attention that it would be better to have our sisters leave the day after tomorrow (Friday) so that Sister PHELAN may go to the sheds next Monday. . . . . “

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during the voyage, which meant that the nurses passed a great part of the night transporting cadavers that had been placed in the SHED where their bodies were kept until the following day when they would be brought to the cemetery. These poor unfortunates arrived in a state difficult to describe. Nature and the elements seemed to be mourning these poor victims. A torrential rain was falling, thunder was groaning with fury and in the midst of this terrible noise we heard the cries and the groans of the sick and the dying who, thrown about pell-mell and not being able to support the jolting of transport, gracefully asked to be placed in the bad-weather shelter, in order to expire in peace. Finally we were able to place these poor sick in their designated SHEDS. During this November night, sisters PHELAN and MONTGOLFIER had

retired into a shelter serving as a dormitory, when suddenly, they heard an excruciating racket. It was that of cries and repeated noise at the door. Sister PHELAN, without troubling herself, took a great stick which she had as a precaution in the room and advanced rapidly towards the door. . . It was nurses, she recognized them, harassed by fatigue and full of drink; they were famished and, believing themselves to be in the kitchen, came to haul open the door of the sisters' cell. The sight of the sisters surprised them, they remained stunned, but soon after a new surge of hunger and perhaps the quarrelling amongst themselves returned them to their state of excitement and preceding delirium. Sister PHELAN made them quiet themselves and gave word to call the police: her patience had reached its limit. Her steady gaze startled them and they retreated. One of them, with an affable air that is often characteristic of intoxication, softly replied:

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“Yes, my Sister, I will retire, but only for you, I tell you, yes for you, but not for the others.” And silence followed soon after this alert.

The challenges, the little persecutions directed against the sisters during the second period of their sojourn in the ambulances are but, after all, the effective part of the holocaust renewed every day and in these details of immolation, the sisters accepted them and directed themselves towards the shelters.

We should not be shocked if they are faithful to a grace which they have not ceased to ask from Heaven: the strength of martyrs. Many will obtain it as a reward.

Ah! Now, more sensible would it be for her to envision the scene of this last phase of the episode we have told.

For six months, the epidemic in Montreal has raged with a continuously increasing progress, nevertheless the cold of winter will without doubt slow its march; but in exchange, what misery will we encounter? Navigation has ceased, a great number of convalescents are already in place; too weak still to look for work, they nevertheless ask for bread. A shed has been reserved for them; we have them share and promise them a ration which barely sustains them.

The government is having a ration distributed to each which consists of a half-pound of bread daily, a quadron of beef and a little bit of tea for breakfast, often without sugar or milk. We continue to make soup at lunch, but without oatmeal; at night, we prepare gruel.

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How can the government find enough, in effect, to nourish such a great number of people? Nevertheless the rations augment by half, this is still too much. So on the representations that are made, we decide to give THIRTY GALLONS of MILK per day. From this day, the sisters make rice-milk themselves which they distribute to their poor sick, which is of great consolation to them.

The straw mattresses, drapes, bed covers etc., were provided by the government; but for their clothing, a great number of patients were reduced practically to nudity, and here is how. Upon the arrival of the sick at the shelters, we took possession of their crates and their effects; we placed them in a locked depot, the key for which was confided to the assistant guard. The latter told patients that this was done in order to ensure the security of their effects, but when it came to reclaiming

them, the poor people could not find what belonged to them, and having nothing to change into, were reduced to disgusting uncleanness.

The sisters bemoaned this state of affairs, but could not remedy them without exposing themselves to great difficulty as, at this time, their presence was resented, and because the poor sick whom they loved would be infinitely more miserable if they were to be abandoned to the care of the mercenary employees, mostly all protestant, in whose presence the sisters closed their eyes to a piles of issues and acted in all circumstances with reservation and prudence.

Nevertheless, the sisters believed that they needed to inform the Monsignor of

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Montreal, who came to the shelters to visit the sick, of the pitiable state of a certain number of the poor victims of acts of bad faith committed who, for one reason or another, did not wish to restore their dignity. Monsignor, touched by compassion for these already tried unfortunates, sent to the sisters several dozen shirts and other effects to be distributed to the most needy.

The charity which does not cool in our Christian country, inspired collections, contributions; but our citizens are not LORDS, or powerful gods, and we know that our green countryside does not have precious mines.

We have seen with admiration a great number of families, already charged with children, welcoming the poor orphans of the strange land; but what more can we

do? The sick in the shelters are still hungry, what torment! . . . They are sad and worried. . .

Let us insert a letter from mother McMULLEN to Mgr BOURGET:

“General Hospital, Montreal,                      October  
1847”

“Monsignor,

“I submit to Your Highness the different remarks I have made on the subject of the SHEDS:

“In the mentioned SHEDS, we give no food to the sick, from lunch to dinner, nor from dinner to breakfast. Treating them in this way, is the way to make them remain bedridden longer, and even to cause the death of several among them.     A great number of caregivers and nurses

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“sleep in the SHEDS with the sick. All THREE of the caregivers stay awake every night for the night shift, without receiving any provision . . . treating them in this way, is certain to expose them to the illness: it is not a consideration of the government, since the patients would then be cared for at a price. The dormitory designated for the caregivers could contain from eight to ten beds. . . there are actually thirty-three caregivers. We have asked to have the dormitory enlarged; this was refused. Nevertheless yesterday, one of the workers told us that he thought we were going to enlarge it. Sister PHELAN has asked to have a few things for the caregivers for during the night, this was refused to her. The nurses who serve in the women’s SHEDS sleep in the same apartments. Every night, a man and a woman stay awake and watch over in each of the SHEDS; it is hoped that the doctors who are also

staying awake to watch over the SHEDS pay great attention that nothing against honesty and decency happens.

“Since yesterday, M. CRAWFORD has softened, he has spoken to our sisters with much politeness. There is no more discussion of making the chapel into a SHED.

“I have the honour to be with the most profound respect, Monsignor

“Your very humble and very obedient girl,

“Sister McMULLEN, sup.”

“There was nothing more distressing for us, wrote one of our sisters, witness of these scenes in the SHEDS, than hearing these poor unfortunates saying without cease: “My sister, I am dying of hunger, I have nothing to sustain myself with, give me, I beg of you, something so that I do not succumb.” One night, during which we entered

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“the SHEDS during supertime, a great number of these poor famished approached us, and told us the story of their misery. Some of them showed us their lunch; nothing but a potato, and for their dinner, a small piece of bread. We saw several sick crying and saying “We are dying of hunger.”

“There remained but one more place to look for help: the paternal assistance of the Mgr of Montreal. He had sent our way money which regularly amounted to \$20.00 (TWENTY). This donation was frequently given, and so we bought bread and



butter for our dear sick, the number of which lately had reached FIVE HUNDRED.

“Without the generosity of this charitable pastor, where would we be with our poor patients? This was for them a second Providence; also with such respect, with such love did they pronounce his name!”

“It is impossible, said sister CARON, witness of these facts, to express the gratitude of these poor people, when they saw enter into their apartments the people charged with nourishing them. They threw themselves onto their knees and thanked the Lord and asked him for an abundance of benedictions for their benefactors, such as Mgr BOURGET, the RR. PP. Jesuits which they regarded as veritable fathers, and their Grey Nuns. . . . .”

After the closing of the shelters in the month of April, there remained still a great number of convalescents, whom because of their state of weakness, could not yet work to sustain themselves and had only the arches of Heaven as a roof over their heads. In the way of their enterprise and their insistence the sisters obtained permission from government agents

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to allow them in the SHEDS overnight; but they did not wish to charge themselves with nourishing them. What to do? We could not let them die of hunger. In this extreme situation, the sisters turned to him who had always borne the burden of the SHEDS: they addressed themselves to Mgr BOURGET, who extended his generosity up until the moment when the poor unfortunates were able to provide for themselves.

September 27<sup>th</sup> of this same year (1847), M. de Courson, superior general of Saint SULPICE wrote to Mother McMULLEN:

..... “I do not want to miss the occasion to tell you that we have been taken by your pains and triumphs. DYING FOR JESUS-CHRIST, IS TO VANQUISH AND TRIUMPH. This thought was our consolation when we learned of the death of our dear brethren. It is also yours. Our losses have not rendered us whatsoever insensible to those you have endured, and I have recommended your deceased and your sick to the prayers and to the holy sacrifice of all the priests of our Company while recommending that of our dead and our sick. It was the same conflict, and its combatants should not be separated from each other. Providence, in associating us in this way, has strengthened the links that united our TWO Communities, and a charity more tight than in the past, if that is possible, is manifested between us, in all occasions. It will be the principle of a redoubling of the zeal and of devotion of our good work. There is in the conduct of God within our houses the grand benedictions of which we feel the effects. Let us continue to immolate in the service and in the glory of our adorable Master.

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“I look to fill the gaps that the scourge has created in the seminary, and I have confidence that God will provide me the means to do so. It will be the same for you: God increases the vocations, and through generous vocations; you will be able to complete the admirable task that God has given to you. Therefore have an inalterable courage and march on in the name of good.

“I am very sincerely, in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, my very dear Sister,

“Your all devoted and very humble servant,

(Signed)

“L. de Courson.”

## CHAPTER XI

## THE CONSOLATION

The angel of agony takes a few eternal words to the divine Crucifix in comfort. The merit of this divine sadness and the encouragement which the incarnate Word wished to receive we obtain, the grace of supporting our greatest bitterness, if not with contentment, at least with submission.

These unfortunate children of Catholic Ireland experience with truth and taste, even on strange soil, in the midst of cruel suffering, a few of these consolations which come from Heaven. Their faith is maintained with strength and perseverance, and their hope of eternal retribution detaches them from all the goods of down below.

A great number of these emigrants received on our soil, the benedictions of God, the abundance of these earthly goods, and this is because

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of their fidelity and their attachment to our holy religion.

A great number are converted, and the Irish-Catholics provided great joy.

The untiring devotion of Mgr Bourget and his coadjutor Mgr PRINCE, as well as that of the priests and the clergy, came in such great numbers to their aid, dilated their oppressed hearts by such cruel anguishes. The sight of the sisters, so attentive in their relieving, consoled them.

Upon their approach, they made the sign of the cross, joined their hands and lifted them towards the sky.

The presence of R.P. O'Mally, who came from Ireland with them, made them forget their exile. He was so good, so sensitive, that he could not hear of his compatriots without spilling tears.

The service of the little chapel was welcomed in an expressionless joy, we were so happy to assist in the holy sacrifice.

MGR. PRINCE said the first mass and the sisters sang pious hymns.

This humble chapel saw much abjuration, here they administered the holy baptism as well as other sacraments that had been delayed. Many adults were baptized, confirmed and married according to Church Law.

It was also there that we celebrated with the greatest solemnity possible the beautiful anniversary of CHRISTMAS. The sisters sang pious hymns with orphans that they had brought along

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with them from the motherhouse. It was in this chapel of exile that we loved to pray for the grand O'Connell, the liberator of Ireland, whom death had harvested in the fateful year of 1847, before he witnessed the triumph of his glorious cause.

It is in this year 1847 that the Church of Saint Patrick was blessed, the mother church of all Irish congregations in this city. It was on the very day of Saint Patrick's anniversary that his Highness Mgr Prince made his benediction. The reverend M. CONNOLLY said an hour-long sermon. Because of the cruel challenges faced by Irish Catholics, we cancelled the ordinary banquet given in such circumstances to all the contributors.

But we read in the annals that on this very day, the community of the Grey Nuns invited the orphans from Saint Patrick's ASYLUM, open for a few months at

the time on MURRAY street, to come have lunch at the mother house, which took place to great contentment on all parts. The little girls were welcomed by the little girl orphans and the little boys in Saint-Alphonse's Hall, that of the little boy orphans.

In these days, this orphanage definitely has its denomination, we knew it in the city as SAINT PATRICK'S ASYLUM. Here is an excerpt from an English newspaper that we cite in translation:

“SAINT PATRICK'S ASYLUM.” – “We direct attention to this charitable Institution and hope it will receive an increase in public support. Those who first suggested the undertaking and then generously devoted a commodious building for the Institution are rewarded in its daily benefits.” “February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1847.”

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Saint Patrick's Asylum, in the beginning, was simply an enterprise for reuniting a number of the poor and the orphans that Sister HURLEY wanted to pull out of the misery and that she confided to Madam McGrath, who indeed wanted to share in this devotion. Sister Hurley nevertheless did not live in this first house which she visited daily and which she provided for in all needs by her collections and her ingenious industry. It was only on October 9<sup>th</sup> 1847 that THREE sisters took internal direction of this house, which underwent several mutations. M. McMGRATH had accorded this lodging free of charge for only SIX MONTHS. . . We then went to take possession of another lodging at M. McDONNELL'S, which lasted another TWO MONTHS . . . . We then went to inhabit a building on Bleury Street for FOUR or FIVE MONTHS, and finally at the residence of M. de ROCHEBLAVE, where the men of the Seminary who served the Church of Saint Patrick

withdrew to, in 1848. In 1849, we found the poor and the orphans of Saint Patrick on CRAIG STREET, in the house of M. Augustin PERRAULT, where they remained until Saint Patrick's Asylum was built in 1851: it was blessed on November 21<sup>st</sup> by R.M. Billaudèle, Seminary superior, Sister HUGHES, charged with the conduct of the house on Craig Street, went there to assist sisters Mary CHRISTIN and St CROIX (Robin).

During these years, in 1850 probably, Sister REID, charged with the visit of the poor Irish in their homes, had opened a house where FIFTY (50) poor families lived on COLBRONE Street, which she supported through alms. In this house, she had collected FIFTY poor orphans, the parents of whom died during the painful period of

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typhus. Madam Brown, a victim herself of the exile, and who had escaped from the fury of the contagion with her young family, took care of these children and made an elementary class for them, with great success. But soon the good father DOWD, giver of alms to the poor, reunited all the orphans to those on Craig Street. Madam BROWN was equally welcomed.

Sister REID succeeded Sister HUGHES and was the first superior at the Asylum that we see today next to Saint PATRICK'S Church.

Sister FORBES took over administration of this little house in 1853, and remained there until her death in 1877.

Sisters OLIER and DALPEE, who were the most elderly missionaries in this house, were equally regarded as superiors, succeeded Sister FORBES one after the other, Sister Pagnuele who remained for TWENTY-TWO years, and the other sisters DEVIS and HARKIN.

Sister PEPIN as well as the two first companies of sisters HUGHES and REID, sisters MARY (Christin) and St CROIX (Robin) saw the first and happy developments of the asylum. They nevertheless had to endure much privation and sacrifice; this house was sustained but by charity and the support of the Irish congregation, the devotion and generosity of which never wavered. Every year, a bazaar, collections and other receipts of benefaction raised funds to help care for the poor; but the orphans were so numerous, and we welcomed equally the elderly infirm without support. . .

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Sometimes, we suffered and said nothing. One day, for instance, the sister in charge of expenses came to warn the superior, towards nine o'clock in the morning, that she had absolutely nothing to prepare for supper. All the provisions were exhausted. Sister REID answered her: "My sister, we will first go do our reading, as it is the time to do it, and we will see what we can do." We had the orphans pray, and with the reading barely finished, we heard loud knocking at the door. A good elderly man, charged with an enormous bread basket, brought the provisions necessary for supper. He had had the inspiration to organize a walking collection in favour of the poor at Saint Patrick's Asylum.

We have many facts of this type, to be related here. The Divine Providence was admirable to this house.



Amongst the Ladies of Charity who protected Saint Patrick's Asylum with goodwill, Madam VALLIERES of Saint-Real, who was the insignia of benefaction in her devotion, was given particular mention and her benefactresses, Madams Chs. WILSON, M.P. RYAN, Madam W. BRENNAN and Madam MURPHY assisted her admirably.

Saint Patrick's Asylum has become so prosperous today that we say abundance reigns over it. We do not fear however prodigality. A sage and discrete administration holds in its hands the wellbeing of the poor to offer favour to the greatest number.

We ordinarily count at Saint Patrick's one hundred and fifty (150) to TWO HUNDRED (200) orphans, the names of which enter the registry yearly.

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To see these children reunited and marching in their processions, clothed in habits convenient to the prosperous state of their houses, we admire the divine Providence and we repeat with love this soft invocation which comes to our lips every day: "DIVINE PROVIDENCE, YOU ARE THE MOTHERS OF ORPHANS." The details which we have just given on the house of Saint PATRICK are quite succinct. Many pages written on the beginnings of this house are lost. We are thus denied the consolation which we would have had in knowing the admirable protection Heaven offered this house and are particularly edified by the devotion and the spirit of

sacrifice which were animated by the first sisters who took over administration of the asylum. How much privation did they endure, them and their poor.

That which we cannot doubt, is the grand benediction that the Lord pleased himself to offer to this work, which is honoured today not only by the Irish congregation, but by the city of Montreal.

We will certainly not finish this imperfect sketch without mentioning two truly moving traits, at the occasion of two families, the children of which were welcomed in Saint Patrick's Asylum a short while after the typhus:

One headed by a man named WELSH, having escaped the disastrous scourge, was looking for a little girl he had lost. He entered the parlour of the asylum to request information; he was accompanied by his little boy, whom he had had the joy of finding with the family whom he had been placed with. AT this time, Sister St Croix (Robin), hospital worker at the orphanage, directed the children outside to

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amuse themselves, when suddenly a little girl of FIVE or SIX detached herself from the ranks recognizing not her father, but her little brother, and jumped into his arms. The little boy recognized her as his little sister, and both of them embraced each other in tears, to the great content of the father, who was still in doubt of the consolation of being able to find his little girl. We can easily understand the joy of this poor father.

We have spoken highly of Madam BROWN, who helped Sister Reid, as assistant and instructor of the FIFTY orphans that she had collected in the house on COLBOURNE Street.

Madam BROWN had come from Ireland on the fever infested boats; she caught typhus, and was transported to the SHEDS, where she was cared for. This

good and tender mother had THREE CHILDREN; one was a little boy and TWO little girls, BRIGITTE and ROSE, which were placed like other children with good families. The little boy was welcomed by the Reverend M. ARCHAMBAULT, priest of Saint-Hughes, who had him study and directed him happily to a career in the priesthood. Having become a fervent priest, M. BROWN replaced his benefactor in his own parish.

Madam BROWN having entered perfect convalescence, occupied herself with looking for her children. She learned of the devotion of the reverend M. Archambault for her son and was able, after much looking, to locate her daughter BRIGITTE, but she was not able to find her daughter Rose, the youngest. She prayed and cried. One day she was assisting in a celebrated office at Saint Patrick's Church where the sisters had conducted the orphans. This poor mother was thinking without a doubt of her little ROSE. All of a sudden one of the

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orphans, a little girl, amusing herself with a little marble that she was rolling around with her little hands, dropped her toy; the child, without worrying about anyone, was in pursuit of her marble which stopped, from rolling, in one the folds of Madam BROWN'S robe. O goodness! Madam BROWN recognized her child. Let us judge the emotion and the happiness of this tender mother. She had now found her the whole of her family that remained in this land of exile.

It is without doubt after the later event that Madam BROWN became auxiliary of Sister REID in the instruction of her orphans.

BRIGITTE and ROSE entered the novitiate, but after a few months, it was quite visible that Brigitte was not being called to religious life; she returned to her mother and was properly married in the parish of her brother. ROSE persevered in her holy vocation and was professed under the name of the Sister Saint-PATRICE. God was happy with her sacrifice, she lived but a few years, dying at the age of twenty-two and some months, having passed close to SIX years in the Community where she truly was a little rose without thorns in her soft and pacific character, exhaling perfumes of a soft and solid piety.

These touching facts bring to memory a few details on emigration to Canada, that of one of our sisters, finishing her career in the women's room at the General Hospital. (Grey Nuns)

The history of this exiled girl, as she was, demands sympathy.

When, in 1847, the English government piled

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the poor of Ireland in the numerous ships sailing towards the two AMERICAS, they found themselves to be equally voluntary in their exile of searching for Heaven's better fortunes. A young man and a young woman embarked one day on one of these ships. They were brother and sister. SAMUEL and ESTHER had just torn themselves away from the arms of their dear parents who consented to this cruel separation to answer the present solicitation of a cousin in Toronto, who wished to have them inherit her fortune. They were Protestants.

Armed with certificates and valid identification, they crossed the ocean. Esther caught a fever aboard the ship. . . But Samuel her brother was so attentive to her recuperation that he saw his sister come back to life, and was confident that she would convalesce.

Once arrived in Montreal, Samuel hastened to procure tonics to continue with more assurance his route towards TORONTO. He entered a restaurant, but fearing that his sister would be interrogated as she still appeared to be suffering, said to her: "MY SISTER, SIT DOWN ON THE SILL, I WILL RETURN QUICKLY, AND IF SOMEONE ASKS YOU IF YOU ARE SICK, YOU WILL ANSWER NO." Samuel had barely entered when a vehicle rapidly approached and stopped a few feet away. . . A gentleman disembarked and headed straight for the young girl who had not escaped his regard (he was probably a doctor). "You are sick, said he. – I am not, answered ESTHER as she trembled. – You were sick. – Yes, but I am better. – Let me see your tongue." And in taking her pulse, he exclaimed in horror. Calling thereafter his coachman, he threw poor Esther into his vehicle,

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and the horse in all haste headed towards POINT SAINT CHARLES. The poor child was crying and screaming with all her strength for her brother, who left the house terrified and began running to try and catch up to his sister. He realized that she was being brought to the SHEDS and arrived with her. They could barely exchange a few words. “Do not cry, Esther, he said, I will not leave Montreal before you have recovered. Tomorrow I will come see you.” The following day, did Samuel return or did he not? Alas! Young ESTHER was already under the influence of a delirious fever which rendered her unconscious of everything.

She never saw her brother again who probably inherited the fortune of his elderly cousin. Did he search for his sister, in order to bring her with him? . . . It is possible, but the divine Providence watched over this fourteen year old girl who happily fell into the arms of the sisters of Charity.

Esther recovered from the cruel illness that is typhus, she attached herself to the sisters who had taken care of her, listening to their instruction, edified by their pity and conceived the desire to embrace the Catholic faith. She was instructed, and soon she received baptism from the hands of the good and reverend Father O’MALLY and had her first communion in the modest chapel in the SHEDS. We thought of placing her properly with one of our good Canadian families, and the respectable parents of mother COULEE welcomed her amongst them.

Esther adopted the name of MARY in her baptism and declined that of her family, in order to remove herself from the potential search of protestant parents which she could have encountered in the country. She remained close to seven years with M. COUTLEE where she received only the best of care, but the

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poor child found exile everywhere. . . . was she so alone on this earth, so far from her parents and from her beloved brother who had directed her towards this strange country and whom she no longer heard of? . . . Mary turned to God and placed her consolation in his hands only. She remembered the Grey Nuns and particularly Sister CINQ MARS, who had been a second mother to her. Mary decided one day to share in the work of her benefactresses in caring for the poor and the sick: it was a debt of reconnaissance to be paid. She spoke to the parish priest: it was at the CEDARS that the Coullée family lived. Yet neither the pastor nor the hospitable family which had welcomed the poor orphan consented to her departure. The poor child, nevertheless, could not distract herself from the good edification and the reconnaissance that had been born in her heart. She was finally able to, one day, properly take time away from her hosts. After having affectionately shared her gratitude, she arrived in Montreal and went to throw herself in the arms of mother DESCHAMPS, superior. It was in 1855 or 1856. Mary was admitted to the house and placed in the room of the Guardian Angel, where children were brought by wet nurses when they reached EIGHTEEN months to be cared for. In this room, the NURSERY was substituted much to the admiration of visitors. After having shared her goodwill in the room as well as in others, the poor child caught precocious infirmities. She found once again in her dear

Grey Nuns an unaltered charity. She had her bed and care in the women's room, where she ended her existence, purified by the sufferings of gouty arthritis.

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We can easily recognize our poor Mary McKUNE, always cognizant of the divine Providence's care, and happy to have seen her little ship which was going into the darkness and fury of the storm, arrive in favour at the "STAR OF THE SEA", to a port of truth and welcome.

Truly it is costly to distance oneself in the vast field which we have run through. This place of Point SAINT-CHARLES which we have stridden is a blessed place, it is home to six thousand (6000) martyrs. The railroad that crosses in all directions before us today in Pointe SAINT-CHARLES and the one thousand and one (1001) dwellings that stand in all directions before us, let us barely see the place that in other times was a valley of epidemic.

An enormous stone erected as the first monument to the workers who built VICTORIA BRIDGE, is our only indicator of this venerable place, by its humble inscription.

But if the cooled ashes of our Irish brothers have neither marble nor cypress to shade their graves, Heaven will immortalize their glory, and our Canadian annals will register, with respect, this place of their misfortune and the admirable devotion it produced.



Happy is the age that made saints and martyrs under acts of oppression. Happy were the years 1847 and 1848, which gave us heroes and heroines not combating with the sword, but dying for the relief of strangers.

Oh holy religion, yours is the glory of this heroic devotion! . . . Horrific episode, but so glorious, how will we forget you? . . .

Asiatic cholera appeared in 1849, 1852, and 1854. The

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Grey Nuns did not retreat in the face of this destructive pest. Which is the infected house that did not know their devotion? Typhus even returned as a new ghost with many apparitions.

In 1867, we feared an epidemic; TWELVE TO FIFTEEN sisters who had visited the sick caught the contagion. TWO died: sisters Lantheir (HURTUBISE) and Bailleur (MARIE DE BONSECOURS).

The first, still a postulant, had said in going to the pestilent, what a joy it would be for me to die in this exercise of charity, I would be a martyr. Our father fulfilled her wish. A palm, a crown, signalled the celestial engagements of this contender to religious life.